

## First exhibition of emerging British artists to go on display at the British Museum

*Drawing attention: emerging British artists*

17 March – 28 August 2022

Room 90

Free

*Generously supported by Art Fund*

Press images: <https://bit.ly/3rnlgqS>

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In a first for the British Museum, a series of exciting **new acquisitions by emerging British artists**, will be the focus of a new exhibition. *Drawing attention: emerging British artists* will exhibit more than 20 new acquisitions by contemporary emerging artists **many of which have never been displayed before**. These artists have lived, studied, or worked in the UK, and their work will be displayed alongside drawings by renowned figures including Michelangelo and Andy Warhol.

Twenty-four works, acquired with the support of an Art Fund New Collecting Award, showcase innovative new approaches, methods and materials, with the emerging artists using mediums ranging from make-up on a facial wipe to coloured pencil on paper, experimenting with the boundaries of what a drawing can be. *Drawing attention* is free to visit from 17 March until 28 August 2022 and explores themes of identity, untold histories and the medium of drawing itself.

Fifteen pieces from the British Museum's world-renowned collection of prints and drawings will also be included in the exhibition, highlighting continuities in drawing across time. Famous artists ranging from **Michelangelo to Andy Warhol, Käthe Kollwitz and Antony Gormley**, will be on show alongside the new acquisitions, which include works by Sin Wai Kin (formerly known as Victoria Sin; b.1991), Rosie Hastings & Hannah Quinlan (both b.1991) and Jessie Makinson (b.1985). These acquisitions reflect on, extend and develop the existing collections, and expand the wide range of subjects and techniques found in the national collection of Western prints and drawings cared for by the British Museum.

The new acquisitions from these emerging artists bring stories and perspectives not currently represented in the Museum collection, including artists addressing challenging questions of identity, gender, sexuality and social justice. Some of the artists look inwards, exploring their personal experiences, while others confront complex social issues such as LGBTQ+ representation and the experience of other marginalised groups.

The exhibition is formed of three sections: *Self and Other*, *Alternate Histories* and *Medium and Materiality*. *Self and Other* highlights how drawing – a medium historically used as a means of self-examination – can be used to investigate the relationship between the personal and external. Highlights include drawings by Jessie Makinson, who takes inspiration from ecofeminist writings and traditions of speculative fiction. In Makinson's drawings the worlds of the human and non-human collide, and are inhabited by fluid, anthropomorphic figures. In Makinson's *And Other Darlings* (2021) figures sporting tails, pointed ears or spotted skins, have ambiguous relations toward one another which could be perceived as both erotic and menacing. Many of the figures seem to be engaged in rituals, games or dances – though it is not clear if they are helping or hindering one another. The work will be shown alongside a drawing of a Pictish woman by the 16<sup>th</sup> century English artist John White (c. 1539-1593). Dressed in fanciful mythological garb the imagined encounter with a historical Pict (who lived in northern and eastern Scotland during late antiquity) is flavoured by the artist's actual encounter with Indigenous Americans as the first governor of the English colony at Roanoke, Virginia.

*Alternate Histories* includes powerful but marginalised stories and draws attention to lesser-known histories. Artist duo Rosie Hastings & Hannah Quinlan's work addresses the loss of queer spaces around the UK by depicting the cabaret bar Funny Girls, a mainstay of Blackpool's nightlife for over 25 years. Their eponymous drawing *Funny Girls* (2019) reimagines the bar as a vast church-like building with classical proportions recalling Renaissance books of perspective. Within this space Hastings & Quinlan bring to life the complexities of the musical theatre character the 'Diva': charismatic, larger than life, and often a means for gay playwrights to express their queerness at a time when to do so openly was dangerous and illegal. Many of the figures are modelled on those of historic artists, such as Michelangelo and Andrea Mantegna, whose drawings are held in the British Museum's collection. Michelangelo's preparatory study for the *ignudi* (decorative nude figures) on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel will be shown alongside the drawing it helped to inspire.

The final section of the exhibition, *Medium and Materiality*, explores the physicality of these artworks. Sin Wai Kin's witty and experimental drawings *something more violent than recognition* (2017) and *what you have gained along the way* (2017) were created by removing the artist's caked-on drag makeup with a face wipe to create a series of 'Impressions'. The artist identifies as non-binary, using they/them pronouns, and their 'Impressions' series examines the performative nature of gender, as well as the blurred boundary between drawing and printmaking. By using their body to create a direct impression, the works provide an intimate record of the artist; they also echo a myth about the origins of printmaking as deriving from the *sudarium* of St Veronica, a cloth which received a miraculous impression of Christ's face after he used it to wipe away his sweat and blood. There are many examples in the collection, such as a striking woodcut by the German Renaissance artist Hans Burgkmair, which will be shown alongside Sin's drawing.

*Drawing attention* is the culmination of a £50,000 Art Fund New Collecting Award which was awarded to Monument Trust Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawing Isabel Seligman to research, acquire and display around 20 drawings made by emerging artists who have studied, lived or worked in the UK.

**Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, said:** “Collections are at the very heart of a museum’s work, and the British Museum’s prints and drawings collection is one of the very best in the world. But it is vitally important for future generations that it continues to develop, so we are grateful to Art Fund’s New Collecting Award for allowing us to strengthen our holdings with exciting new British artists.”

**Isabel Seligman, Monument Trust Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawing said:** “This exhibition enables us to amplify some of the freshest and most compelling new voices in British contemporary art, helping us to tell stories not currently represented in the Museum collections. This project will ensure that an exciting new chapter in the history of drawing is represented in the collection and safeguarded for future generations”

**Sin Wai Kin, artist, said:** “It is very meaningful to have my works acquired as part of the Art Fund New Collecting Award project. As an emerging artist, having my work in the British Museum Prints and Drawings collection is important to my legacy. It was a joy to work with curator Isabel Seligman on this acquisition. I am thrilled that my two works *What you have gained along the way* and *Something more violent than recognition* will be held by the Prints and Drawings collection in particular. As an artist who studied both drawing and print, I am honoured to contribute directly to these canons and have them placed in conversation with the historical traditions of draughtsmanship in *Drawing attention*.”

**Rosie Hastings and Hannah Quinlan, artists, said:** "At a time where austerity and gentrification have contributed to the loss of public infrastructure and the closure of many LGBTQ+ spaces, we sought to return a sense of magnitude, permanence and decadence to a culture during a historical moment of loss and change. *Funny Girls* being part of a public collection feels very important to us and highlights a line of inquiry in our practice that is concerned with critically historicising and archiving LGBTQ+ spaces in the UK. The work will be housed alongside Michelangelo and Mantegna, who are an ongoing and limitless source of inspiration to our practice.”

**Jessie Makinson, artist, said:** “Being from London, I have been to the British Museum many times growing up. To be included in this show is quite hard to believe and means a great deal to me, particularly to show alongside many artists I greatly respect and admire.”

The free exhibition *Drawing attention: emerging British artists*, opens at the British Museum on 17 March – 28 August 2022 in Room 90. Generously supported by Art

Fund. Alongside this in Room 90 will be *Printmaking in Prague: art from the court of Rudolf II*.

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## Notes to editors

**Full list of emerging artists:** Catherine Anyango Grünewald (b.1982); Josephine Baker (b.1990); Miriam de Búrca (b.1972); Somaya Critchlow (b.1993); Jake Grewal (b.1994); David Haines (b.1969); Rosie Hastings & Hannah Quinlan (b.1991); Mary Herbert (b.1988); Jessie Makinson (b.1985); Jade Montserrat (b.1981); Sin Wai Kin (b.1991); Charmaine Watkiss (b.1964).

## Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. A further £2 million has been made available in 2021 for Reimagine projects. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by Art Partners, donors, trusts and foundations and the 130,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 is Firstsite in Colchester.

[www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org)

## The Department of Prints and Drawings

The Department of Prints and Drawings contains the national collection of Western prints and drawings, in the same way as the National Gallery and Tate hold the national collection of paintings. It is one of the top three collections of its kind in the world. There are approximately 50,000 drawings and over two million prints dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century up to the present day.

The collection is available to the public through the Study Room and through a programme of temporary displays, touring exhibitions and loans.



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For more, follow the British Museum blog at [blog.britishmuseum.org](http://blog.britishmuseum.org)

**Further information**

Contact the Communications team :[communications@britishmuseum.org](mailto:communications@britishmuseum.org)

High resolution images and caption sheet available at <https://bit.ly/3rnglgS>