

**The Working Artist: The East London Group**  
curated by Michael Rosen and Emma-Louise Williams

East London Group paintings to be shown at their home in Bow, with a focus on member Albert Turpin – Mayor of Bethnal Green and leading political figure – with contemporary commissions highlighting sites around Bow and Mile End Road



Albert Turpin *Lakeview Estate* © A.E.Turpin Estate, 2017



Albert Turpin *The Seabright Arms* © A.E.Turpin Estate, 2017

**Private View** Thursday 28 September, 6-9pm

**Exhibition** 29 Sept – 17 Dec 2017

This September, the East London Group returns to the Nunnery Gallery with a new collection of paintings, selected and curated by writer broadcaster **Michael Rosen** and radio producer film-maker **Emma-Louise Williams**.

Working during the inter-war period, the East London Group of artists were made up of ordinary working men and women, attending art classes and exhibiting their paintings alongside their day jobs. There were thirty-five members – including **Walter Sickert, Phyllis Bray, William Coldstream, John Cooper, Elwin Hawthorne, the Steggle brothers, Brynhild Parker, Henry Silk** and **Albert Turpin**.

Rosen and Williams have selected over 50 works for exhibition, with a special focus on little-known works by Albert Turpin. Turpin was not only a critically acclaimed artist but a prominent figure in local politics, as a leading force in the East End anti-fascist movement and Mayor of Bethnal Green. His works tell the story of the East End's resilience through a turbulent time of war and peace and will be shown alongside sketchbooks and political pamphlets that haven't been seen for 70 years, providing a vivid and contextual narrative to the paintings.

Accompanying the exhibition will be a series of new in-situ commissions by artists working in east London today, highlighting recognisable sites in the paintings surrounding the Nunnery Gallery. Walking tours of the local area will guide visitors around these new public artworks, finishing at Queen Mary University of London – who have supported the new commissions – where remnants of a mural painting by East London Group member Phyllis Bray can still be seen in the People's Palace.

The patronage provided by the East London Group's famed supporters – Sir Joseph Duveen, Samuel Courtauld and Arnold Bennett to name a few – led them to great heights, with their achievements contextualised in the press by the artists' means of earning a living, a "window-cleaner", "shop assistant" and "pipe inspector". This exhibition, with its wealth of previously un-exhibited material, sheds new light on many of the characters of the group, who were accomplished artists – lauded by the art world – but also active war artists, heroes of east London politics and avid chroniclers of the changing face of the London of their time.

The exhibition coincides with a flurry of newly published books that encompass the Group and their stories, including an illustrated memoir from Albert Turpin himself: *East End Vernacular, Artists who painted London's East End streets in the 20th Century* (The Gentle Author: Oct 2017); *So They Call You Pisher! A Memoir* by Michael

Rosen (Verso: Sep 2017); *The East End – My Birthright* by Albert Turpin (Francis Boutle: Sep 2017); *The Story of Titania and Oberon, with illustrations by Phyllis Bray* (Pavilion Books: 2017).

Of the focus on Albert Turpin, curators Rosen and Williams said:

*“Admirers of the Group find themselves drawn more to one artist than another, and in our curation we've pinpointed the world of Albert Turpin. Turpin was an unstoppable sketcher, filling countless notebooks with drawings of his family, while bringing to the Group a Fauvist tendency to colour his East End in a robust and affectionate way.*

*“He was politically committed to the struggles of those around him and in putting this exhibition together we were delighted to meet Turpin's daughter and granddaughters who were able to provide documentary materials to give witness to Albert Turpin's commitment.”*

Sophie Hill, Nunnery Gallery Co-Director, said:

*“Then, just as now, population flux and insistent remodelling characterised the streets sandwiched between the City and what is now the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Ordinary working men and women picked up paint brushes to capture the changing landscape.*

*“Highlighting the sites of our surrounding local area through contemporary artwork not only draws attention to east London's changing architecture, but also showcases the talent of artists working in east London today – whose work is certainly inspired by our area's rich political and social history which, as the East London Group demonstrates, has always had a long and poignant relationship with art”*

ENDS

**For interviews, with Michael Rosen, Emma-Louise Williams or the East London Group families, or images contact:**

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#### Notes to editors

Exhibition: East London Group  
Dates: 29 Sept – 17 Dec 2017  
Admission: Free  
Opening Hours: Tues to Sun, 10am – 5pm  
Address: Nunnery Gallery, Bow Arts, 181 Bow Road, London E3 2SJ  
Travel: Bow Road Tube Station, Bow Church DLR  
Contact: +44 (0)20 8980 7774 / [nunnery@bowarts.com](mailto:nunnery@bowarts.com)

#### About Bow Arts

Bow Arts Trust was established as an educational arts charity in 1995 and supports a community of over 500 artists with affordable, secure and creative workspaces. Bow Arts also runs the Nunnery Gallery, a contemporary art gallery which supports a diverse range of local, national and international exhibitions and events.

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