

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

Paintings return to the East End for the first time, from institutions and collections across the country



Images, clockwise from top left: Albert Turpin: *Salmon and Ball*; *The Arches, Cambridge Heath Road*; *Cable Street*, courtesy the artist's family © A.E.Turpin Estate, 2017; Harold Steggle *Grove Hall Park, Bow*, courtesy Brian Andrew Worthington © the artist's estate.

Private View Thursday 28 September, 6-9pm

Exhibition 29 Sept – 17 Dec 2017

The historic East London Group returns to the Nunnery Gallery, selected and curated by writer broadcaster **Michael Rosen** – whose parents were contemporaries of the Group's artists – and radio producer film-maker **Emma-Louise Williams**. Discovered in family collections and public institutions across the country, many paintings are returning to Bow for the first time since their making in the 1920s and '30s.

Made up of ordinary working men and women, the Group attended art classes and exhibited paintings alongside their day jobs; led by John Cooper, the infamous Walter Sickert was among their guest teachers. Encouraged to paint what surrounded them, the paintings immortalise the history of east London's streets and buildings, with member **Albert Turpin's** later works documenting the drastic re-modelling of the area following the Second World War. With a focus on Turpin – who, as window-cleaner, fireman, leading member of the anti-fascist movement and Mayor of Bethnal Green, was the ultimate 'working artist' – the works 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.

With loans confirmed from across the country, including Manchester City Art Gallery and a curious little-known portrait by **Brynild Parker** from Blackburn Museum, other artists to be showcased include **B A R Carter**, **Elwin**

Hawthorne and the Steggles brothers. Walking tours of the local area will guide visitors around the scenes in the paintings, as well to three newly commissioned public artworks commemorating the Group by artists working in east London today.

The exhibition coincides with a flurry of newly published books that encompass the Group and their stories, including the new illustrated memoirs of Albert Turpin: *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).

Sophie Hill, Nunnery Gallery Co-Director, said:

“As one of east London’s main studio providers for artists working today, the chance to bring the paintings of Bow’s past back home is very special. The East London Group paintings are rich in both history and social narrative, revealing what has changed and what hasn’t about our local area.”

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.”

ENDS

For interviews, with curators Michael Rosen and Emma-Louise Williams or the artists, and 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

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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.

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