

New exhibition explores east London through the ages, showcasing historic paintings from the East London Group



Elwin Hawthorne *Bow Road*, 1932, courtesy Nunnery Gallery

In the footsteps of the East London Group

Exhibition dates 4 October – 22 December 2024

Bow Arts is delighted to present an exhibition exploring the past and present of east London, bringing together the historical paintings of the East London Group with their 21st century contemporaries.

Inspired by the East London Group's scenes of the old East End, 22 painters from the Urban Contemporaries group and invited guests, including David Hopher, Doreen Fletcher, Ben Johnson, Philippa Beale, Timothy Hyman RA and Harriet Mena Hill, have created new works to be shown alongside their historical counterparts.

Exploring the artists' shared passion for immortalising, celebrating, and unpicking the streets and scenes of east London, the show will explore the city across time – remembering long-demolished buildings, revealing hidden streets, and celebrating communities from the 1920s to the present day. A newly commissioned sound piece,

made by an artist local to the Nunnery Gallery, will also provide an atmospheric soundscape to the exhibition.

The historic East London Group began with evening painting classes in Bethnal Green; made up of mostly working-class men and women, the group painted what surrounded them – the East End – capturing their city in a way never previously seen. Taught by painters John Cooper (1894-1943) and Walter Sickert (1860-1942), amongst others, the group became enormously successful despite the class prejudices of the time, exhibiting at Whitechapel Gallery and National Gallery, Millbank (now Tate Britain) and representing Britain in the Venice Biennale in 1936.

Only in recent years has the Group gained the historical recognition it deserves, and this show will present work from artists including Elwin Hawthorne, Cecil Osborne, Grace Oscroft, Henry Silk and the Steggles brothers, including works never previously seen publicly. Viewers will be able to explore Bow Road, Bethnal Green, and Grove Hall Park (behind the Nunnery Gallery), as well as canals, lumber yards and breweries, witnessing through these fascinating depictions the face of a changing London during the inter-war years.



The accompanying contemporary works explore a city changing at an even faster rate, capturing the buildings that have been dismantled and recreated, and the historic remnants that defiantly remain. Ignited by stories, of the artist's own memories, ancestry, or research, these paintings are layered urban interpretations and though often personal, will inevitably be shared by others who walk these streets and call them home. With subjects including the brutalist Robin Hood estate before its demolition, the regenerated walkways of east London's canals, and the ever-growing urban skyline, many of the works will hang next to their historic inspirations, presenting an intriguing comparison between

the London of now, and that of nearly 100 years ago.

The exhibition has been curated by Alan Waltham (East London Group) and Ferha Farooqui and Frank Creber (Urban Contemporaries) together with Sophie Hill, Director of the Nunnery Gallery.

Above image: Doreen Fletcher *Lost in Spitalfields* 2023



ENDS

For interviews, more info and images contact

Sophie Hill, Director of Arts & Events shill@bowarts.com | 07764 232 167

Leah Jun Oh, Marketing Officer loh@bowarts.com | 07360 176 919

Bowarts.org | [X](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [#BowOpen](#)

Notes to editors

Exhibition: In the footsteps of the East London Group

Exhibition dates: 4 October – 22 December 2024 (PV Thursday 3 October, 6-9pm)

Admission: Free | Opening Hours: Tues to Sun, 10am – 4pm

Venue: Nunnery Gallery, Bow Arts, 181 Bow Road, London E3 2SJ

Travel: Bow Road Tube Station, Bow Church DLR

Contact: 020 8980 7774 / nunnery@bowarts.com

About Bow Arts

We create inspirational, supportive environments where artists and communities interact, learn and flourish. Since 1994, Bow Arts has nurtured London's diverse creativity and talent. We've provided artists and creative practitioners with affordable workspace, connecting them with local communities and supporting their professional development. We give communities throughout London greater access to and interaction with the arts, through our schools programme, workshops, exhibitions and events.

Housed in a former 19th-century convent building, surrounded by our artist studios, the Nunnery Gallery is our not-for-profit art space. Our programme pushes boundaries with an original and creative approach that explores the stories of east London and celebrates today's artistic talent.

About Urban Contemporaries

The Urban Contemporaries Group was set up in 2019 by Ferha Farooqui and Frank Creber to bring together figurative painters, interested in exploring the urban experience. They curate ambitious responses to subjects, responding with drawing as a starting point, painting as the common medium and individual encounters with urbanised life as the dominant motif. They conceive themed shows that reflect upon the urban condition.