

Heads – In and Out of Time: Lancelot Ribeiro

Ben Uri Gallery NW8 0RH Sep - Nov 2024



Lancelot Ribeiro, *King Lear*, 1963, oil on canvas
Ben Uri Collection © The Estate of Lancelot Ribeiro

Working in partnership with the Estate of Lancelot Ribeiro (1933 Bombay (Mumbai), India – 2010 London, England), the exhibition *Heads – In and Out of Time*, borrows its title from the artist's own long-planned but unrealised idea for an exhibition, focusing on his preoccupation with portraiture and imagined heads in two of the most innovative decades of his practice, the 1960s and the 1990s.

Ribeiro's early work was inspired by Indian and Goan architecture and the Christian tradition in which he was raised. In his 'portraits' he explored concepts of power and evil, which he listed as: 'colonialists, kings, tyrants, Christ (resurrected), tycoons, women and thugs'. His friend, the Indian poet, translator and critic R. Parthasarathy, observed, however, that

Ribeiro's 'true subject' was his 'origins – Goan roots, estrangement from India, and exile in London'. The exhibition unpacks how these two concepts informed his choice of subject matter and practice. His innovative approach included working with new and experimental materials including polyvinyl acetate or PVA (a precursor of acrylic paint), sometimes mixed with other non-traditional media, such as string (*Warlord*, Tate). In his later work Ribeiro often worked on a large scale, employing a brilliant palette and taking an imaginative approach to reinvigorating the portrayal of the human head.

A supporting display in the lower galleries feature works from the Ben Uri collection exploring related themes and motifs.

A series of related talks and events and a fully illustrated online publication will accompany the exhibition.

Notes for Editors:

About the artist: Born into a Catholic Goan family in India, Lancelot Ribeiro (1933 Bombay (now Mumbai), India – 2010 London, England) first moved to England in 1950, and studied part-time at St. Martin's School of Art. After returning to Bombay in 1955, he became a full-time artist in 1958, sold out his first solo exhibition in 1961, executed a large mural commission for Tata Iron and Steel, and participated in the exhibition tour (Europe and North America) of *Ten Indian Painters*. Nominated for the All-India Gold Medal, Ribeiro returned to London in 1962, co-founded the Indian Painters' Collective, UK (IPC) in 1963, initiated the exhibition *Six Indian Painters* in 1964, and held a solo exhibition in Hampstead in 1965. He co-founded the Rainbow Art Group in 1976, which evolved into the Indian Artists UK group in 1978, and exhibited extensively in both solo and group shows in India, Europe, the USA and Canada.

Ben Uri artists include: Albert Abramovitz (1879 – 1963), Jack Bilbo (1907 – 1967), David Breuer-Weil (b. 1965), Dodo (1907 – 1998), Alfred Daniels (1924 – 2015), Henryk Gotlib (1890– 1966), Eugen Hersch (1887– 1967), Susanna Jacobs (b. 1966), Elisabeth Tomalin (1912– 2012), and Scottie Wilson (1888– 1972).

The Ben Uri Collection was formed in 1915 in London's East End by Russian-Jewish decorative artist and craftsman Lazar Berson to support Jewish artists working outside the cultural mainstream. In 2002 the remit widened to include all first- and second-generation immigrant artists, irrespective of national, ethnic, and religious/ non-religious origins, who have helped to enrich Britain's visual culture. The Collection, begun in 1919, now reflects three waves of migration to the UK: first- and second-generation Eastern European Jewish migration prior to the First World War; the so-called 'Hitler émigrés' both Jewish and non-Jewish (1933–45), and wider multicultural immigration after the Second World War.

Curated by Marsha Ribeiro and Sarah MacDougall

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