

NEW CONNECTIONS: MODERN BRITISH ART

Exhibition: Saturday 16 April – Sunday 19 June 2011

Private View: Friday 15 April 6 – 8pm

Mottisfont Abbey, one of Hampshire's oldest historic houses, is revisiting its links with the Modern British art scene with a new exhibition that has seen a hitherto private floor of the house transformed into a contemporary exhibition space.

The first exhibition, *New Connections: Modern British Art*, showcases selected works from Mottisfont's **Derek Hill Collection**, alongside significant loans from Austin / Desmond Fine Art, London, a selection of which will be for sale. The exhibition explores the personal and professional connections between Hill and his contemporaries, and identifies some of the key themes of this period of Modernism in Britain.

The early 20th-century was a time of extraordinary creativity for the arts in Britain. Arts patron and society hostess Maud Russell embraced this movement and turned her home, **Mottisfont near Romsey**, into a vibrant hub of artistic activity.

One of Maud's great friendships was with the renowned portraitist and landscape artist **Derek Hill** (1916-2000), who was born near Southampton and brought up at nearby Broadlands. Hill was a friend and advisor to many of the most influential artists of the day, whose work he also collected, some of which he later bequeathed to Mottisfont.

New Connections will introduce the theme of 'outsider art' with a focus on the first generation of self-taught painters from Tory Island (off the North West Irish coast), amongst them **James Dixon** and his direct association with Derek Hill. Dixon started painting at the age of 72 after encountering Derek Hill on Tory Island at work on a landscape painting of his own. Derek Hill's subsequent encouragement and patronage saw Dixon become an important figure in the history of 20th-century Irish art.

Early abstraction in St. Ives will be explored with artists such as **Naum Gabo, Ben Nicholson, Adrian Stokes, Margaret Mellis and Peter Lanyon**. A look at the Neo-Romantic English landscape painters of the 1940s and 1950s will include work by **Graham Sutherland, John Piper and Michael Rothenstein**, and a display of works by the 'Kitchen Sink' artists of the mid 1950s; **John Bratby, Derrick Greaves and Edward Middleditch**, will provide insight into the realist painters' depictions of the everyday in still life and landscape.

New Connections: Modern British Art, at Mottisfont Abbey is a collaborative exhibition between the National Trust and Austin / Desmond Fine Art. Exhibition runs from 16 April to 19 June.

Open daily 10am – 5pm. (last entry 4.30pm)

LOCATION: [Mottisfont Abbey, Mottisfont](#), Romsey SO51 0LP, Tel: 01794 340757

For further information & high resolution images from AUSTIN / DESMOND FINE ART please contact Evie Howard: T: 020 7242 4443 e.howard@austindesmond.com or visit www.austindesmond.com

PREVIEW RECEPTION:

Friday 15 April, 6 – 8.30pm. If you would like to attend, please email Lotte Inch, National Trust Exhibitions Programmer: lotte.inch@nationaltrust.org.uk.

PRESS PREVIEW:

Thursday 14 April. If you would like to arrange an appointment to view the exhibition on this day please contact Lotte Inch, National Trust Exhibitions Programmer, 07709 424155, lotte.inch@nationaltrust.org.uk

DEREK HILL (1916 – 2000)

Derek Hill was born in Hampshire in 1916, the son of a wealthy sugar trader. He worked as a theatre designer and then historian, but enjoyed increased success as a society portrait painter from the 1960s. His subjects include the Prince of Wales, Sir Alec Guinness and Sir John Betjeman, amongst others. In later years, he became widely respected as a landscape painter, particularly in his adopted Irish home where he is a national figure (he had a studio on Tory Island off the coast of Donegal and was a founding member of the Tory Island group of artists). The National Portrait Gallery and Tate Britain both hold works by Derek Hill in their collections, which include portraits of former Prime Ministers Sir Anthony Eden and Sir Edward Heath. He was made a CBE in 1997.

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