

Eileen Cooper RA

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First major survey exhibition of Eileen Cooper RA to open at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery

**Parallel Lines: Eileen Cooper and Leicester's Art Collection
Leicester Museum & Art Gallery
10 September to 27 November 2022**

This autumn, the first major survey exhibition of British artist Eileen Cooper RA opens at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery. **Parallel Lines** will bring together over 40 works created across Cooper's 40-year career presented in parallel with paintings, drawings, prints, ceramics and sculpture from Leicester's Art Collection by artists including Paula Rego, L.S Lowry, Peter Doig, Pablo Picasso and Therese Lessore.

Eileen Cooper first drew attention in the 1980s with her commitment to figurative painting. She is known predominantly as a painter and printmaker, but her work extends into paper, collage, ceramics and sculpture. **Parallel Lines** marks the first time Cooper's early works from the 1980s will be shown alongside more recent pieces and will include examples from two new bodies of work: a series of portrait drawings of her Royal Academy Schools students and paintings created on the theme of La Toilette. The exhibition will look at the areas of artistic influence and themes in art history that have informed Cooper's works – and their natural parallels within the Leicester collections - while also considering where ideas and inspiration come from and how museum collections have impacted on artists today.

Throughout her career Cooper's work has contained a strong autobiographical element, while being allegorical and poetic. The concerns and experiences that she depicts are timeless and of universal relevance. A strong colourist and often described as a magic realist, Cooper brings an unapologetically female perspective to her subject matter, which encompasses sexuality, motherhood, life and death. Cooper is one of the few artists of her generation to show us the world through female eyes, creating narratives of the collective female experience in a world populated by a cast of children, lovers and friends.

The exhibition will open with Cooper's self-portraits, including **Studio with Tiger (2002-3)**, which depicts the artist in her studio populated by some of her familiar motifs, shown in parallel with **Lotte Laserstein's Self-portrait with a Cat (1928)**. Other exhibition highlights include **Creepy Crawly (1987)**, an example of Cooper's early figurative painting which was influenced by German Expressionism, and in particular Leicester's **Red Woman (1912)** by Franz Marc, a work that captured her attention when she was teaching at Leicester Polytechnic.

Cooper is an artist who has worked extensively in the field of arts education. She taught Peter Doig at St Martin's School of Art, and his painting **Concrete Cabin (1991-2)** will be shown alongside Cooper's **Going Ape (1982)**. As the first woman Keeper of the Royal Academy of Arts, Cooper was responsible for turning around the reputation of the RA Schools so that today it is known internationally as one of the best post-graduate art schools. Her love of teaching is reflected in her drawings over 50 of her RA students, three of which will be on show for the first time in the exhibition.

In the same way Cooper is drawn to the collaborative process of printmaking, her interest in ceramics grew from meeting Janice Tchalenko, Glenys Barton and Jacqui Poncelet while they were teaching at Camberwell, and this opened up a network with other ceramicists, including Annie Turner. The exhibition will bring together key works created in collaboration with Turner, shown alongside Picasso ceramics.

The exhibition will also focus on key themes and genres in art history that relate across both Cooper's work and the collection. From *La Toilette*, *The Nude and Mother and Child* to *Beasts*, *Dance and Circus*, these themes also highlight Cooper's preoccupation with the physical body. Highlights include new works such as ***Mother's Day* (2021)**, in which Cooper revisits motherhood thanks to the recent arrival of a granddaughter, and ***Motherhood* by Royal Academician Thomas Cantrell Dugdale (1880-1952)**; ***Evergreen* (2018)**, inspired by a visit to Lebanon and its forests of cedar trees; and ***Spring Fever* (2013)** shown alongside ***The Violinists* by Arnold Gerstl (1888-1956)**.

Parallel Lines: Eileen Cooper and Leicester's Art Collection is curated by Kathleen Soriano, independent art curator, writer and television broadcaster. The exhibition is accompanied by a publication featuring essays by Kathleen Soriano and Linsey Young, Curator of Contemporary British Art at Tate. The publication is generously supported by Eileen Cooper's London gallery, Huxley-Parlour.

For more information about, please visit Eileen Cooper: www.eileencooper.co.uk
For more information about the exhibition, please visit: www.leicestermuseums.org

Ends

For more press information and images please contact Iliana Taliotis on mail@ilianataliotis.com or +44 (0) 7931 341 112

About Eileen Cooper

Eileen Cooper RA is a respected artist known for her strong and passionate commitment to figuration.

Studying first at Goldsmiths College (1971-74) and then at the Royal College of Art (1974-77) she went on to teach at a wide range of art schools including St Martin's, the Royal College of Art, City & Guilds in London and latterly at the Royal Academy of Arts. In 2000 she was elected a Royal Academician. From 2010-17 Cooper served as Keeper of the Royal Academy, one of only 4 officers selected from the 80 Royal Academicians, and with primary responsibility for the Royal Academy Schools, thereby becoming the first woman to be elected to this role since the RA began in 1768. She is represented by [Huxley-Parlour Gallery](#) in London, where her solo exhibition 'Somewhere or Other' ran from 22 June to 16 July 2022. www.eileencooper.co.uk

About Leicester Museum & Art Gallery

Leicester Museum & Art Gallery is the city's original and flagship museum, open since 1849 and the most popular free attraction in the East Midlands. The galleries and collections include Ancient Egypt, Dinosaurs, the Victorian Art Gallery, Arts & Crafts Gallery, Picasso Ceramics: The Attenborough Collection and Leicester's internationally renowned German Expressionism collection. www.leicestermuseums.org