

BLITZ

Images of the Blitz and its aftermath have now become familiar and sanitised - the backdrop for popular films and the inspiration for cosy patriotic slogans - but the devastation caused by the Luftwaffe bombing between September 1940 and May 1941 was shocking and unprecedented. The apocalyptic horror of the actual bombing and the almost unrecognisable landscapes it produced, faced artists with an overwhelming visual challenge. But meet it they did, with sometimes quite extraordinary courage: a fireman artist called W.S. (Wilfred Stanley) Haines was particularly intrepid, continuing to work as red hot ash from the bombs embedded itself into his canvas (a picture that survives in the Imperial War Museum) only to lose his life in a subsequent raid – an event recorded by one of his fellow artists in a picture called, with typical gallows humour: “Time Gentlemen Please”.

The collection of pictures gathered here include a very rare, on-the-spot, image of the famous Luftwaffe raid on Coventry by Pegaret Keeling, who would later produce memorable images of life in the clothing and munitions factories that sprang from the ruins. There is also a particularly accomplished and complete record of the London Blitz by the eccentric Rebel Stanton, who trained as an architect (that discipline can be seen in the superb precision of his pencil) before taking to graphic art. We also include the extraordinary work of another fireman artist: Peter.L.Smith, whose powerful and evocative paintings record details of his traumatic working life in West London during the latter period of the war, when the threat from the air took the form of those sinister, unmanned flying bombs, the doodlebugs.

PEGARET KEELING (1915-2000)

Pegaret Keeling’s wartime output is typical of the engaging and spirited output of unofficial war artists in WWII. Keeling graduated from the Central School of Art, where she studied dress design under Jeanetta Cochrane, in the late 1930s and, at the outbreak of WWII, offered her services to the War Artists Advisory Committee as a war artist. She was given licence to produce images of female factory workers in munitions and clothing factories, which she did with great verve and humour. She also produced some on-the-spot images of the Blitz, of which this is a rare example.



The Blitz on Coventry CAT. 28
Watercolour, initialed and inscribed

Rebel with a Cause

C. REBEL STANTON (1890-1954)

Stanton was a flamboyant, unconventional and versatile artist illustrator, whose work could be found in magazines as various as *The Tatler*, *Picture Post* and the *Illustrated London News*. His best known work was a series of carved and decorated panels on the *Queen Mary*. He was commissioned by the War Artists' Advisory Committee (W.A.A.C) to record bomb damage in London in the summer of 1941, in the immediate aftermath of 76 successive nights of Luftwaffe bombardment between September 1940 and May 1941.



Bombed out café in Dorset Street CAT. 29
Graphite, signed and dated



Ludgate Hill after the Blitz, August 1941 CAT. 30
Oil on paper, laid on board



C. REBEL STANTON (1890-1954)

Drawings of the London Blitz, July-August 1941

Graphite (8) signed, dated July-Aug '41 with official censor's stamp (verso)



St Andrew Holborn from Shoe Lane CAT. 31
Graphite, signed and dated



All Hallows from The Yorkshire Grey Pub CAT. 33
Graphite, signed and dated



Prince Consort, Holborn Circus CAT. 32
Graphite, signed and dated



Theobalds Road CAT. 34
Graphite, signed and dated

C. REBEL STANTON (1890-1954)

Drawings of the London Blitz, July-August 1941

Signed, dated July-Aug '41 with official censor's stamp (verso)



High Holborn CAT. 35
Graphite, signed and dated



St John the Evangelist, Red Lion Square (now demolished) CAT. 36
Graphite, signed and dated



Site of St John Zachary, Gresham Street CAT. 37
Graphite, signed and dated



Ruined buildings, Theobalds Road CAT. 38
Graphite, signed and dated



Sgt ELVA BLACKER (1908-84)

Elva Blacker studied at the Regent Street Polytechnic and the Slade in the late 1930s before joining up at the onset of the Second World War. Initially she drove vehicles for the Blood Transfusion Service before joining the WAAF as an Aircraftwoman Driver serving Fighter Command at Biggin Hill. During this time, she continued her work as an artist, producing a prodigiously extensive record of life in the RAF. The RAF Museum was the ultimate beneficiary of much of her output and on its website, the curator describes their collection of Blacker's work as "a record of life on an RAF station which it would be hard to equal".

The Music Circle, Fighter Command CAT. 39
Oil on Canvas



Menacing Skies

**Britain under Rocket
Attack 1944-45**

**RUDOLPH HELMUT SAUTER
R.I., R.B.A., R.W.A., P.S. (1895-1977)**

This imaginative and sophisticated image of flying bombs in formation (in reality, of course, they flew in isolation) over a stylised suburban landscape of back gardens has been attributed to Rudolf Sauter. The artist was of German origin and had been interned during the Great War at camps in London and Surrey, where he produced images of aerial bombardment that seem to have remained a theme for him into WWII and beyond: there are known images by him involving air raids and even specifically, doodlebugs. The work can be further dated via a Robert Sielle label, bearing an address from which the framer operated between 1937-47, thus dating the picture to between 1944, when the V1 (doodlebug) first appeared and 1947. In style, it is reminiscent of Paul Nash's 'Aerial Creatures' series, where the planes and barrage balloons of war were depicted as surreal shapes in the aerial landscape, or the later work of surrealist artists like John Armstrong. Sielle was a well-known West End framer, as well as exhibition agent, who himself had been a fighter pilot in the Great War. He produced frames for many of the most prominent artists of the day.



Doodlebugs over suburban landscape CAT. 40
Oil on canvas, Robert Sielle Exhibition Agent label verso

PETER L. SMITH (1903-80)

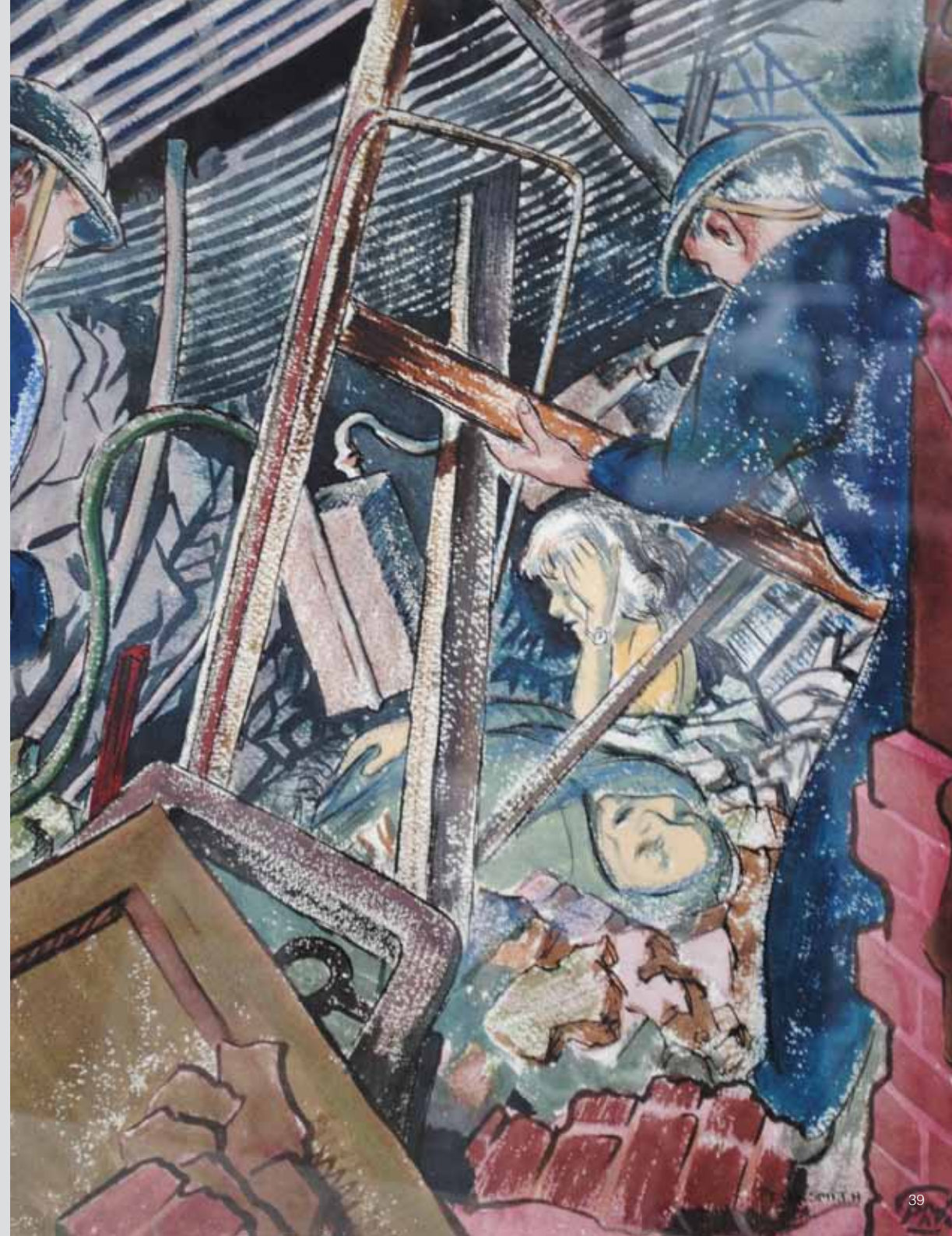
Smith lived in Ealing in West London and, during the Second World War, worked as a firefighter in his local area. Like many artists, he also threw himself into the war effort artistically, exhibiting with the Civil Defence Group of artists, who numbered such future luminaries as William Roberts and Anthony Devas among their number. In later life, Smith became a design draughtsman working in the field of optics and lenses.



The empty room, 1944 CAT. 41
Oil on board



Peter Smith and his daughter Perry



V2 Incident, Ealing CAT. 42
Watercolour on board, with monogrammed studio stamp. Inscribed verso

HILDA DAVIS N.S. (fl.1935-45)

Hilda Davis first came to the notice of the art world in the mid-1930s. Cora Gordon, writing in *The Studio*, said “she exhibits pictures which show a strong concentration of design and a mellow harmony of colour”. At the time, her trademark was London crowd scenes of a kind of Bruegel-esque flavour, full of ribald humour and local colour. Towards the end of the war, Davis held a solo exhibition at Jack Bilbo’s Modern Art Gallery, which was famous for being the only commercial gallery to remain open throughout the conflict. The pictures here were in stark contrast to those she exhibited before the war - full of brooding intensity and devastation and, significantly, devoid of people.

Exhibited: Modern Art Gallery 1945

Literature The Studio 129 (1945) 165-7

The Bombed Out Street CAT. 43
Oil on canvas



HUBERT ARTHUR FINNEY (1905-91)

Finney was an artistically talented south Londoner who won a scholarship to the R.C.A in the mid-1920s, where he fell under the influence of Sir William Rothenstein; a drawing of the young man by his tutor is extant. Finney joined the Light Rescue arm of the Civil Defence service in 1939 and exhibited with the Civil Defence Group of artists throughout the war. He exhibited widely before and after the war, at the R.A., the N.E.A.C. and the Paris Salon.



Blitz Aftermath, City of London CAT. 44
Watercolour



HUBERT JOHN WILLIAMS (1905-89) (*opposite page*)

That triumphal symbol of Britain's railway heritage, the Euston Arch - seen here in its immediate pre-War pomp, replete with lines of blue Austin taxis - survived the depredations of the Blitz, only to succumb to the vandalism of 1960s planners. Hubert Williams, who painted this evocative image, won the Landseer Scholarship to the R.A. Schools and exhibited widely in his early career but later worked mainly as an illustrator of books.

JOHN NASH C.B.E., R.A. (1893-1977)

Prov: Nash Estate

This deceptively simple sketch of machinery under tarpaulin dates from the early years of WWII, when the Nashes had left Meadle and had moved to East Anglia. At this time, Nash was in the Observer Corps but later served as a war artist in the Royal Marines.



Under Tarpaulin (wartime study) CAT. 46
Graphite