

ROMAINE BROOKS

DRAWINGS

20 JANUARY – 26 FEBRUARY
NO.5

Despite her extraordinary life and work, Romaine Brooks (1874 – 1970) remains one of the most under-recognized artists of her generation.

Heiress to a mining fortune, Brooks had a troubled and unstable childhood. Born to American parents living in Italy, her mother was distant and abusive, her brother was mentally ill. When she left her family home to study in Rome, she became involved with an avant-garde group of artists, writers and intellectuals with whom she would work and socialise over the next 70 years, in Capri, Paris and the French Riviera.

Her paintings were radical and confrontational. As her biographer Cassandra Langer notes: "She was one of the first modern artists to depict women's resistance to patriarchal representations of the female in art... She understood that women in art had been treated as objects rather than subjects. She made it her mission to change all that."

This exhibition in NO.5 focuses on her works on paper, bringing together a remarkable group of drawings made between 1905 and 1934. The works depict various themes and tableaux, and have a fluid, almost surreal character, stylising their subjects into archetypal images and design-like motifs. There is a fairytale quality to both subject and style, but they are nightmarish too, including depictions of giants carrying off young maidens, homunculus squatting on beds, and unsettling congregations of serpents, phantoms, beasts and angels.

Brooks' fluent, expressive line creates an uncanny plasticity of form that recalls Eisenstein's writing on

Disney's films. Eisenstein describes the way objects and characters sag, bulge, and stretch according to loose and unnatural laws of movement and mutability, likening them to the formless qualities of fire. Brooks drawings enact a similarly weird and dream like instability — flickering on the paper like pale flames — while at the same time calling to mind the mythic languages of symbolism, the psychologically charged 'automatic drawings' of her surrealist peers, or the 'spirit drawings' of occultists like Austin Osman Spare and Ithell Colquhoun.

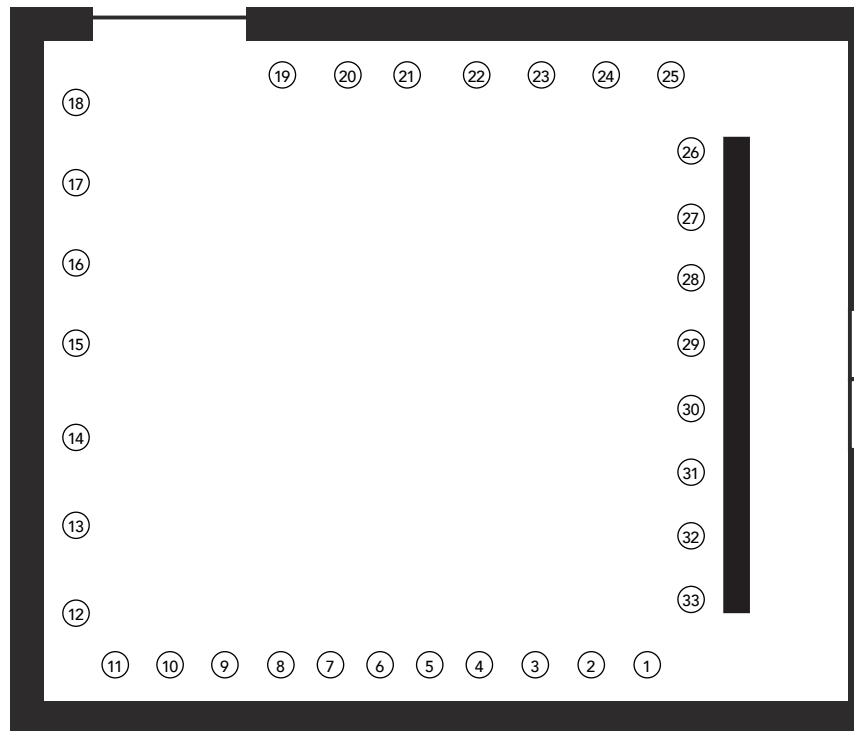
This exhibition has been specially selected by Emily Wardill to coincide with her exhibition, 'Matt Black and Rat' on display concurrently in the Kunsthall galleries.

At NO.5 Bergen Kunsthall re-presents artworks and exhibitions that have been shown elsewhere in the world in recent years. The programme series is a response to the increasing acceleration of both the production and reception of art in the past decade, and an opportunity to slow down, revisit and focus on selected works or exhibitions.

All of the works have been generously lent by Collection Lucile Audouy, following recent exhibitions of Brooks work at Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, 19.12.2015 – 13.03.2016 and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC, 17.06.16 – 02.10.16

A new publication will be available online and in our shop.

Exhibition Map



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Mon Hommel, ca 1925-1935
22,5 x 30 cm | 18 He Clung to the Earth, 1930
30,5 x 23,7 cm |
| 2 The burden, ca 1925-1935
30 x 22,5 cm | 19 Sans titre, 1930
35,5 x 25 cm |
| 3 Sans titre (Jeune fille sur les genoux d'un monstre), ca 1930
30,2 x 22,6 cm | 20 Sans titre (Fœtus), 1930
46 x 30,5 cm |
| 4 La laideur atteignant le génie, 1906
30,2 x 22,7 cm | 21 Beyond Music, 1930
30 x 22,5 cm |
| 5 The Incubus, ca 1925-1935
30,5 x 22,7 cm | 22 The ineffectual nurse, 1930
30 x 22,5 cm |
| 6 The Goddess, ca 1925-1935
30 x 22,5 cm | 23 Quoth the Raven or Nevermore, 1930
30 x 22,5 cm |
| 7 Sans titre (Hamadryades), ca 1925-1935
30 x 22,5 cm | 24 Death and the vision or L'homme qui voit sa mort, 1893
22,5 x 30 cm |
| 8 Self-destruction, 1930
30 x 22,8 cm | 25 Sans titre (fonds abyssaux), 1930
52,5 x 34 cm |
| 9 Sans titre (Hanté) or fantome ??, 1930
30 x 22,7 cm | 26 The bird or L'oiseau, 1930
22,6 x 30 cm |
| 10 La nuit terrible, 1930
30,5 x 22,7 cm | 27 Je me trouvais entourée d'un cercle silencieux de religieuses, ca 1930, 23 x 30 cm |
| 11 Pussys surprise or Le chat surprise, ca 1925-1935
30 x 22,7 cm | 28 The Nightmare, ca 1900
22,7 x 30 cm |
| 12 It feeds on our illusions, 1930
49 x 27 cm | 29 Aspiration or Flying Fish, 1930
54 x 37 cm |
| 13 Pleased with his reflection, 1930
47,2 x 31,9 cm | 30 The bird-man, ca 1925-1935
30,4 x 22,5 cm |
| 14 Prehistoric defection, 1930
46,5 x 31 cm | 31 Implacable destiny, 1910
24 x 18 cm |
| 15 Prenatal Contemplation, 1930
31 x 47,2 cm | 32 La Confession, no date
24 x 18 cm |
| 16 Riviera Jungle, 1930
30 x 22,5 cm | 33 Solomé, ca 1925-1935?
23 x 18 cm |
| 17 Forgotten or Oublié, 1930
30 x 22,5 cm | |

All works: pencil on paper