



Pictured at the Laing Art Gallery are Amy Pargeter, Assistant Keeper of Art at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (left) and Northumbria University PhD student Ella Nixon

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New exhibition explores sense of Belonging through art

A new exhibition, featuring work by North East artists and exploring their connection to the region, has opened at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle.

The exhibition particularly spotlights the work of women artists from within the Laing's collection. It has been curated by Northumbria University postgraduate student Ella Nixon.

Her PhD thesis, entitled *Beyond the National: The Representation of Women Artists in Regional Galleries*, has been carried out in collaboration with the [Laing Art Gallery](#), resulting in the new exhibition – *Belonging*.

As Ella explains, the North East has long been home to talented female artists, whose work has gained prominence thanks to support from the region's public art galleries.

She said: “Over the years there has been a very strong network of female artists working in and around Newcastle, and the North East as whole.

“They have worked together and taught each other, and often their finished work stays within the region because it is donated or bought by friends.

“Likewise regional galleries such as the Laing have played a really important role in providing female artists in the North East a platform to showcase their work, in contrast to the national galleries which tend to collect work by so-called 'block-buster' artists, who are typically men.”

Featuring work by artists with regional connections, such as Louisa Hodgson, Norman Cornish, and Layla Curtis; as well as those from further afield such as Rineke Dijkstra and Paula Rego, *Belonging* is currently open in the Laing's Barbour (watercolour) gallery.

The exhibition highlights artworks from the Laing collection and explores the different forms of belonging, including representations of local histories and landscapes, shared bonds based on religion, legend, and myth; and camaraderie inspired through hobbies and inherited tradition.

It also looks at how artists use imagery in creative ways to explore the opposite of belonging – alienation – including nostalgic reflections of a bygone or imagined era.

Julie Milne is Chief Curator for TWAM's art galleries and said: “As an all-female creative team we are passionate about shining a light on women artists. Ella's research and exhibition enables us and our visitors to see our collection with renewed eyes and promote public knowledge of the relationship between art and gender.”

Amy Pargeter, Assistant Keeper of Art at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums added: “It has been a pleasure to collaborate with Northumbria University to create this new exhibition. Ella’s research into the role of regional galleries has highlighted some interesting details about the historic network of artists in Newcastle and has provided a fresh interpretation of artworks in the Laing collection.”

Ella’s PhD was made possible thanks to the [Northern Bridge Consortium](#) – a Doctoral Training Partnership which brings together Northumbria, Durham, Newcastle, Sunderland, and Teesside Universities in the North East, as well as Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University in Northern Ireland.

Supported by the [Arts and Humanities Research Council](#), the consortium provides up to 63 funded studentships each year to outstanding postgraduate researchers across the full range of Arts and Humanities subjects.

Northern Bridge students benefit from supervision, training and development of the highest quality, tailored to the needs of 21st-century researchers.

Ella joined Northumbria in 2020 after completing a History BA at the University of Cambridge and a History of Art MA at The Courtauld Institute of Art (University of London).

The opportunity to work collaboratively with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums through the Laing Art Gallery as part of the project was a big draw, as she explains: “The collaborative aspect enables me to gain professional curatorial experience, as well as providing insight into the operations of a regional gallery. In a competitive industry, I knew that this experience would prove vital.”

Ella’s supervisor [Dr Claudine van Hensbergen](#) has also worked extensively with the Laing Art Gallery and was UKRI Innovation Fellow for the project [*Learning through the Art Gallery: Art, Literature and Disciplinarity*](#).

This involved working with English pupils from secondary schools to demonstrate how art collections could help them develop and improve their study of language, literature and creative writing, whilst inspiring their wider interest in the Arts.

She said: “Northern Bridge funding has enabled us to grow exciting partnership work in the region, with Ella undertaking cutting-edge research on the Laing’s impressive art collections. Her chosen theme, of ‘Belonging’, is of huge relevance in the present moment.”

[Belonging runs until Saturday 30 November](#). Entry is free, donations are welcome.

[Find out more about the Northern Bridge Consortium here](#).

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Laing Art Gallery:

The Laing has a long tradition of hosting significant exhibitions and bringing iconic art to the North East including works by Monet, Van Gogh, Picasso and Leonardo da Vinci’s drawings from the Royal Collection in 2016, the Lindisfarne Gospels on loan from the British Library in 2022, and most recently *The Fighting Temeraire* on loan from the National Gallery as part of our *Turner: Art, Industry & Nostalgia* exhibition in 2024.

To find out more visit www.laingartgallery.org.uk, follow us on Instagram and Twitter @LaingArtGallery and 'Laing Art Gallery' on Facebook.

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM):

TWAM is a major archive and museums service with strong national and international partnerships. It manages nine museums and galleries (including the Laing Art Gallery) in Tyneside and Tyne and Wear Archives.

www.twmuseums.org.uk

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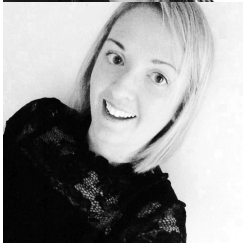


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