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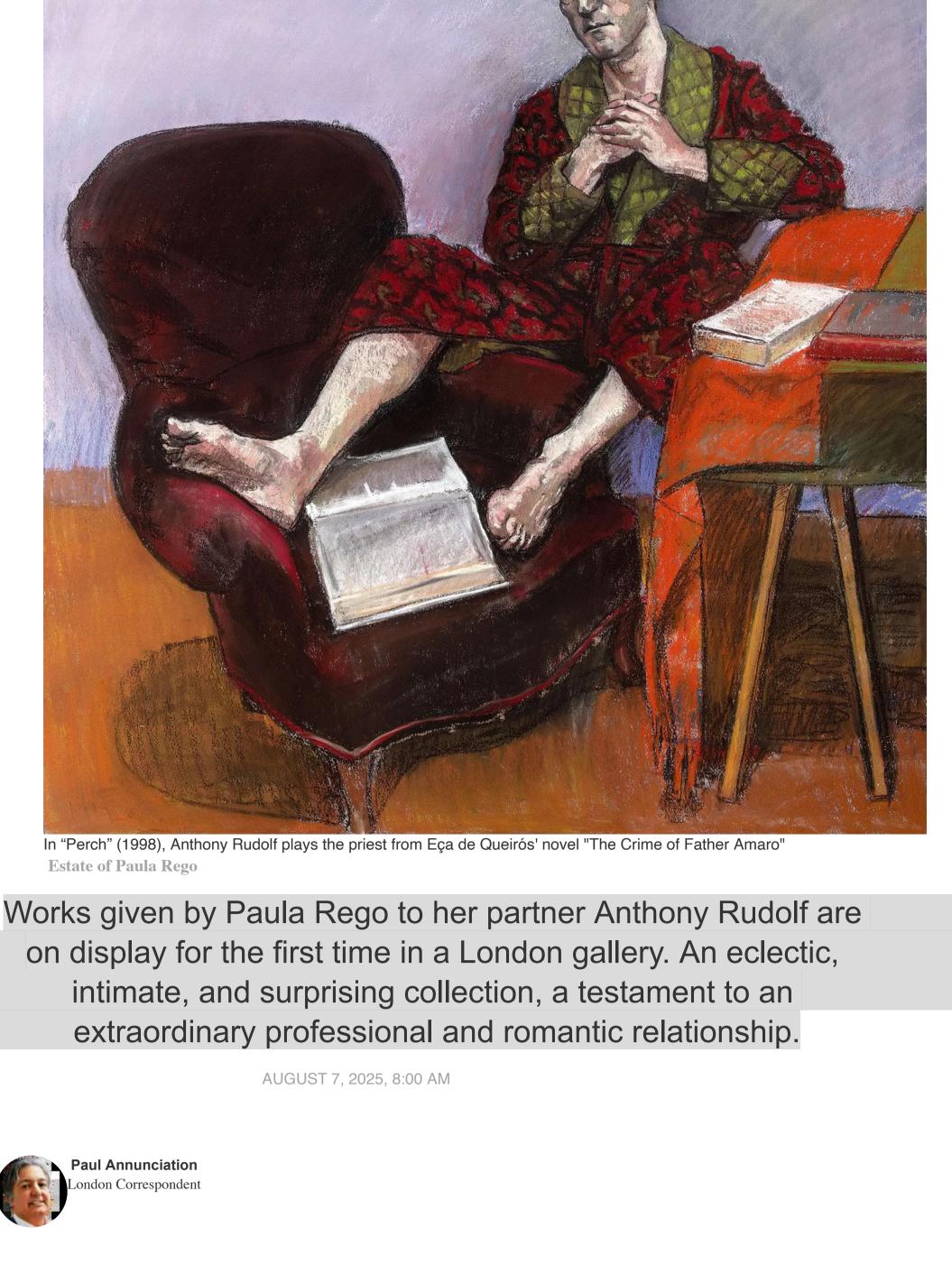
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WEEKLY 08.08.2025

8 August 2025 at 17:48



Over the past four decades, Paula Rego's paintings have been exhibited in the world's most important museums and galleries, from the Tate and National Gallery in London to the Reina Sofía (Madrid), L'Orangerie (Paris), and the Pinacoteca (São Paulo). But anyone who enters London's discreet Ben Uri—a tiny gallerymuseum in St. John's Wood, one of the British capital's most

charming neighborhoods—will come face to face with an

unexpected collection of 48 pieces by the Portuguese artist. "The

Anthony Rudolf Collection" brings together almost all the works that

Paula Rego (1935-2022) gave to the man who was her companion

Paula's best works. It's a collection with a very specific purpose: all

THE ANTHONY RUDOLF COLLECTION – WORKS GIFTED TO HIM BY

and primary male model for over a quarter of a century. "This

exhibition is a kind of documentary. It doesn't pretend to show

these works were given by Paula and are therefore precious to

me," says Rudolf.

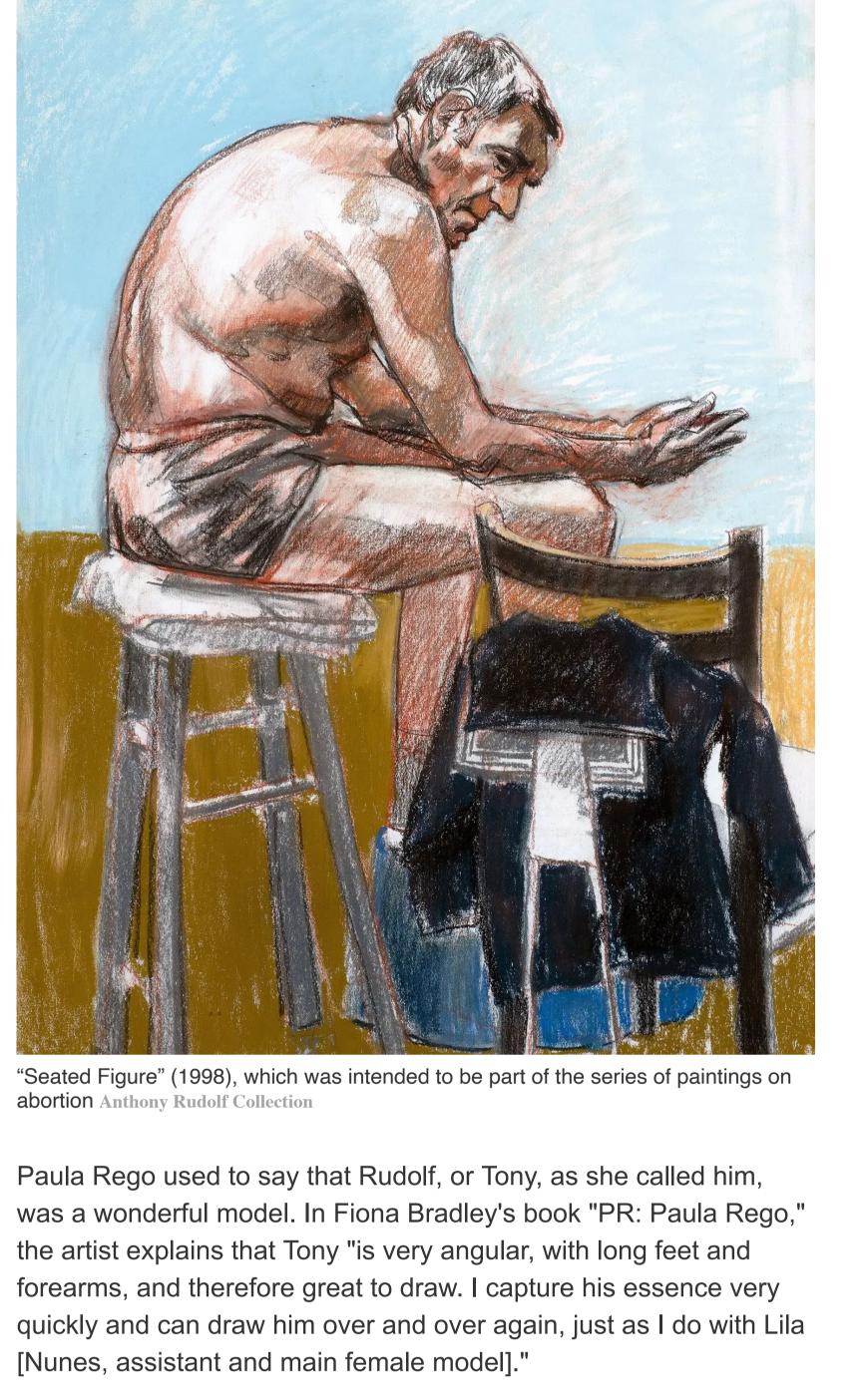
PAULA REGO

as a prop," he recalls.

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London, until September 5 Anthony and Paula became partners in June 1996—he prefers the Portuguese word 'namorados,' "much more tender and adorable." In the fall of that year, he also became her model. This romantic and artistic relationship (Paula used the word "complicidade") would endure until the end of her life, 26 years later. "Three weeks

before she died [on June 8, 2022], Paula even drew a sketch of me

as Branwell Brontë, wearing my own clothes and using only a bottle



"The best portraits, the ones that most resemble me, are the ones in which I was dressed and playing a role in a particular story." **Anthony Rudolf**

But there are also pieces where he's simply Tony—the friend, the

intently editing a text, sitting in a London pub. In the fascinating

2005 "Writing Yes, Reading No"—a tiny pen, ink, and watercolor

drawing—Rego portrays Anthony in the chaotic office of his

apartment, fresh out of the shower. He's sitting in front of the

political essays, and artistic and literary criticism.

companion, the lover. In a sketch from April 2001, Paula draws him

It's no surprise, then, that the collection on display at Ben Uri

"She drew me hundreds of times, as a character in so many

Kafka's "Metamorphosis" (the monstrous man/insect Gregor

stories," Anthony Rudolf explains to Expresso. Sometimes, she

embodies characters in well-known series of pastel paintings by

Rego, such as those inspired by the books "The Crime of Father

Amaro" (Rudolf played the priest), "Jane Eyre" (Mr. Rochester), or

includes nearly two dozen works featuring Rudolf's face or likeness.

computer with only a towel around his waist. "Her message was that I should write more and read less. I'd probably had some idea while showering and was writing it down. Those were times of great happiness," recalls Rudolf, 82, author of several books of poetry,

Samsa).

Rudolf and Rego on a terrace in Venice in 2001, one of the photographs included in

Queirós's novel. This pastel painting is by far the finest work of art

in the collection and one of the few to have appeared in previous

have been submitted to Paula Rego's heirs and their agents for

exhibitions—indeed, all the works in the Anthony Rudolf Collection

registration and inclusion in the catalogue raisonné currently under

preparation; with the exception of "Perch," none of them have yet

portraits, the ones that most resemble me, are the ones in which I

was dressed and playing a role in a given story, not when she was

Some of these works are clearly unfinished. Others are preliminary

studies and reveal the Portuguese painter's evolving creative

been formally authenticated. Rego thought that Father Amaro in

"Perch" closely resembled Anthony, and he agrees: "The best

In "Perch" (1998), Anthony portrays the priest from Eça de

the exhibition Anthony Rudolf Collection

simply painting a portrait of me."

process. The pastel and charcoal painting "Seated Figure," for example, was intended to be part of the disturbing series of paintings about abortion that Rego produced in 1998 and 1999. In this painting, a man (Anthony) sits on a bench and gazes anxiously at an empty chair. "I think Paula considered including male figures in the abortion series," says Rudolf. "But in the end, she must have decided that the father's masculine presence would be more felt if he were absent. It was a good decision, considering the enormous power of this series, which doesn't include a single man." More than just an exhibition of Paula Rego's art, "The Anthony Rudolf Collection" is, above all, a testament to an extraordinary professional and romantic relationship. Rego's pieces are scattered

throughout the gallery-museum's four small rooms alongside

Oxford, or enjoying themselves at Anthony's brother-in-law's

the loving dedications Paula signs on many of the pieces ("For

several enlarged photographs of the couple—sitting on a terrace in

Venice, for example, or vacationing in the Azores, at a ceremony in

birthday party. There's a certain charm of domesticity, attested to by

Tony, with lots of love," "Dearest Tony," "Much love," "xxx [kisses]").

Writing Yes. Reading No "Writing Yes, Reading No" (2005), which depicts Anthony Rudolf in his apartment office, fresh out of the shower Anthony Rudolf Collection

Rego painted portraits of Anthony's mother and children. The exhibition also includes two charming caricatures of Annie, one of Rudolf's sisters (the drawings were to be used on T-shirts printed

for Annie's 50th birthday party). A small, vividly colored watercolor featured the direct participation (and irregular lines) of Leah, Anthony's granddaughter, who was six at the time. Other works reveal the Portuguese artist's humor and playful nature. For Anthony, in fact, Paula Rego "never stopped being a wonderfully mischievous girl." On a postcard purchased in Portugal,

Finally, on a hand-colored tile by Paula Rego, a pelican appears to embrace and kiss a frog (inspired by the 2002 lithograph "Loving Bewick" from the "Jane Eyre" series). "Tony kissing!" she scrawled on the back. Rudolf also says that among the few pieces left out of the exhibition are some "extremely naughty" erotic drawings. Intimate memories, signed by Paula. With love.



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featuring a photograph of three smiling Algarve women at the window, Paula drew a terrifying, carnivorous Tasmanian devil on the back and wrote: "Inside their house, they had a Tasmanian devil as a pet." On another postcard, apologizing for being unable to attend a family ceremony, Paula drew an adorable rabbit. "This is my self-portrait today, as a sick bunny. Unfortunately, I won't be able to be with you at tomorrow's wedding."