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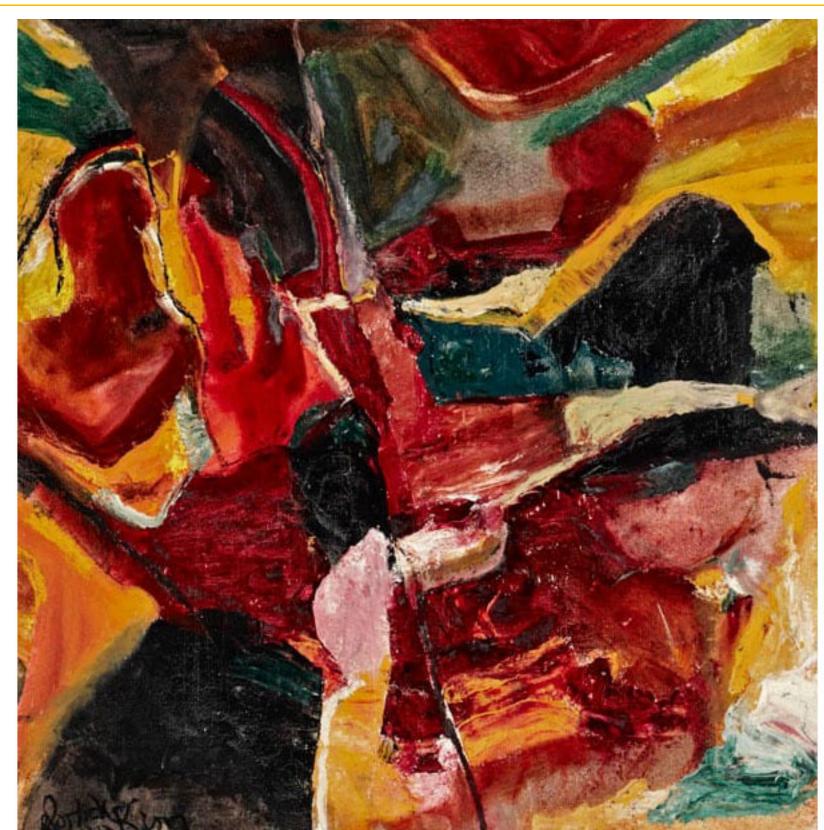
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Photo by Pulok Pramanik.

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Ben Uri shines spotlight on American-born artists in new exhibition



Phyllis Gorlick-King, Tuscany by Train. Acrylic on canvas, 85.5 x 85.5 and dated (lower left: 'Phyllis Gorlick-King, 1978', 1987-124 @Phyllis Gorlick-King. Photo: Ben Uri Gallery.

LONDON.- Following last year's wide-ranging exhibition, Us: From There to Here, exploring diverse immigrant artists from the Ben Uri Collection, this display returns the focus to a single country of origin, highlighting selected artists born in the USA. In contrast to their European counterparts, often fleeing war, persecution or otherwise displaced in the first half of the twentieth century, these artists made voluntary journeys for professional, personal or educational reasons, predominantly after the Second World War.

Probably the best-known, as well as the earliest artist to arrive, was sculptor Jacob Epstein, born into a New York family of Russian/Polish Jewish immigrants, who settled in London in 1905, after five years in Paris. From his first public commission in 1907 to create the (now mutilated) former British Medical Association Building sculptures, he became a figure of enormous controversy, as frequently reviled for his public sculpture as he was respected and sought after for his portraits. The latter span his career and range from Augustus John's two-year-old son, Romilly (1907) to the renowned, exiled German-Jewish physicist Albert Einstein (1933) and an unidentified Arab girl, who modelled as the archetypal Shulamite Woman (1935).

Painter, printmaker and draughtsman R. B. Kitaj led the postwar generation, moving to England in 1958 to complete his training at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford, then the Royal College of Art, London, alongside David Hockney. Kitaj coined the so-called 'School of London' group to describe himself and fellow postwar figurative painters including Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and Leon Kossoff. His portrait of German-Jewish émigré statistician Claus Moser was originally commissioned for the Royal Opera House. Chicago-born Alfred Cohen moved to London in 1960, following his first solo London exhibition at Ben Uri in 1958. Over the next three years, in a series of sellout shows, his panoramic cityscapes charted the changing face of the capital. More than 20 years after his New York debut, Pennsylvanian Howard Baer held his first solo London exhibition at Ben Uri in 1965. Edward Toledano completed his art education at Saint Martin's School of Art in 1983, thereafter exhibiting at Ben Uri.

The 1970s brought a diverse group of women artists including Sandra Fisher, who moved to England in 1971 to pursue a

full-time career as a painter; her portraiture frequently depicted other artists, with whom she often collaborated. The

following year she was hired as studio assistant to Kitaj, whom she married in 1983, influencing his subsequent artistic exploration of his own Jewish identity. Draughtswoman, printmaker and former medical illustrator Jacqueline Morreau settled in London in 1972; fighting gendered notions of identity, particularly in her re-imaginings of mythological and biblical themes, she advanced the Feminist Art Movement in Britain as both artist and curator. Phyllis Gorlick-King also embraced a dual career as a painter and dealer in art and antiques. Heritage is a dominant theme in the work of artist and curator David Gryn and painter Michele Franklin, who both came

to England as children, training at Saint Martin's and Camberwell Schools of Art, respectively. Son of Holocaust survivor

Rabbi Hugo Gryn, David Gryn's work frequently draws on his father's experience and his own upbringing, while Franklin's youthful self-portrait explores her part African-American, Native American and British Jewish heritage which brings the exhibition full circle.



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