

# SUSSEX LIFE

## 'GOOD FIGURES' EXHIBITION – APRIL/MAY 2015

14:58 02 MARCH 2015

**An exhibition of 30 contemporary female artists who depict the female form  
- Downland Jerwood Gridshell, West Sussex, 24 April to 3 May 2015**



Good Figures is curated by art historian Candida Stevens, founder of TINT-ART, a contemporary art forum based in West Sussex, in collaboration with Philippa Gogarty and Alexandra Gray. Good Figures celebrates the diversity and shared focus of the selected artists who range from 22 to 82 in age, from emerging talents to Royal Academicians.

Candida conceived the idea for Good Figures when she noticed that many of the female artists she represents were painting, photographing, drawing and sculpting women. "The time seemed right to invite female artists to portray women for a

dedicated exhibition.” Each selected artist was asked to submit original work for Good Figures. “The response has been tremendous. Of course, now it seems surprising that an all female exhibition featuring female subjects has not happened before on such a scale.” Artist Jane Mcadam Freud points out that the female form is a natural subject for female artists: “I live in it and it is endlessly there in every medium, in all times.”

Candida’s motivation for Good Figures was to celebrate female artists, although she and the contributing artists are aware of the potential for a feminist agenda. Featured artist, Annie Kevans, while researching women in Art History, was surprised to discover how many women had careers as artists as early as the 16th century: “Historically, in their day, many women were as successful as their male counterparts, and yet it is now accepted that women were too oppressed to be remembered amongst the ‘great’ artists - a myth reinforced by curators who fail to collect women’s work or include their work in major exhibitions.”

Eileen Cooper, featured artist and educator, was elected Keeper of the Royal Academy in 2011, the first woman to hold the position since the Academy was founded in 1768. Eileen Cooper writes: “I wouldn’t want to obscure the many great achievements of female artists - but it is still very difficult for women to achieve success and visibility in the art world. The statistics prove this! Female artists face a challenge from art history, which is overwhelmingly about men. Yet, of course, contemporary artists are in constant dialogue with the art of the past. Although we can’t do much about the past, we need to challenge this lack of representation and inclusion, in order to bring outstanding women artists to public attention. I want exhibitions and collections to be representative of all the issues and perspectives in this country.”

Unusually, Good Figures shows the work of established artists like Eileen Cooper RA, Cathie Pilkington RA, Annie Kevans and Jane Macadam Freud alongside emerging artists such as Irene Lees, Liane Lang, Kate Montgomery and the youngest artist to be exhibited, Alice Dyba.

Featured artist, Irene Lees, discovered her artistic brilliance relatively late in life and, though an older artist, her work is arguably the most contemporary and political in the exhibition. The drawings of burkas in her series, ‘I’m Nobody! Who are you’ (after Emily Dickinson’s poem) symbolise the feminine struggle for identity and recognition. “We all live in an environment where masculinity and femininity have been developed to occupy clearly defined spheres. To give expression to this narrative I utilise the medium of knitting, which is essentially a feminine activity, and subvert it to demonstrate my on-going fixation with notions of entrapment. The construction and making of these drawings has been used to give life and meaning to these notions by using a continuous line to construct a burka which appears both vacuous and inhabited at the same time. Through my work I hope to explore and elucidate

our cultural history, as well as analyse a seemingly female obsession with bodily appearance, which conforms to male expectations and demands.”

Candida Stevens summarises; “It has been richly rewarding to gather together thirty of the most exciting female artists working now in 2014, inviting them to create works of art that feature only women. Varied in age and at different stages of their careers, Good Figures has brought together a range of artists with a common purpose. The artists’ unique voices can be heard in their response to the question we asked: ‘The female form because...’ The answers, featured in the Good Figures catalogue, reveal the motivations and inspirations behind a body of work that deserves to have an extraordinary impact.”

Good Figures will move from the Mall Galleries in London to the award-winning Downland Jerwood Gridshell building in the South Downs, West Sussex at the end of April, giving artists time to replenish work sold in the London show. The Downland Jerwood Gridshell Space, located at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum ([www.wealddown.co.uk](http://www.wealddown.co.uk)), was runner-up for the Stirling Prize and its innovative design has won national and international acclaim.

Local businesses Chilgrove Gin, the only gin ever produced in the UK to be made from alcohol distilled from grapes and wine merchants Mason & Mason are exhibition sponsors. It will be the first contemporary art exhibition of its size and significance in West Sussex. The drawings not sold in the London exhibition will be auctioned in aid of Winston’s Wish.