

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art,
Washington, D. C.

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RELEASE: Immediately

WASHINGTON: April 22 : An exhibition of official British war paintings, recording military operations and civilian activities in war-time Britain, will be opened here tomorrow at the National Gallery of Art, it was announced today by David E. Finley, Director. The exhibition will continue through May 20.

Various aspects of the home front in the British Isles, such as the damage by bombing, the balloon barrage, and the Women's Land Army at work, are portrayed in many of these paintings. Others depict phases of military operations in the Middle Eastern and North African Campaigns.

This exhibition was selected from over 2,000 works of art from the "Recording Britain" plan developed by the British Government to foster art in war time. These pictures were chosen by Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery in London, and are the property of the British Government. They are being exhibited in the United States under the auspices of the Artists Advisory Committee set up by the British Ministry of Information.

Among the artists represented, one of the best known in this country is Sir Muirhead Bone. His drawing "Low Tide on the Portsmouth Hard", depicts a balloon barrage over an English town, and is an excellent example of his superb draftsmanship. The vital role of the British women in harvesting crops is shown in a series of oils by Evelyn Dunbar, while the essential work of the coal miners is portrayed by Henry Moore. Scenes from the Syrian Campaign, by Anthony Gross, depict military operations in the desert, and Edward Ardizzone contributes colorful sketches from the African theatre. Other outstanding artists represented are Frank Dobson, R. V. Pitchforth and Eric Ravillious, who was recently reported killed in action.

Early in 1939, the British Ministry of Labor formed a Committee on the Employment of Artists in Wartime. One result of this Committee's recommendations was the "Recording Britain" program. An Artists Advisory Committee, under the auspices of the Ministry of Information, was created to advise on the purchase of works of art. This Committee includes Sir Kenneth Clark, Sir Muirhead Bone, Professor Randolph Schwabe, and others.

Artists were commissioned for six months to cover a specific phase of the war, and single works were also commissioned. Other artists submitted original paintings to the Committee. Forty or fifty were generally submitted every week under this program, but only five or ten percent were selected.

Other official war artists were attached by the Committee to the Armed Services and Government Ministries. Artists attached to the Admiralty saw service at sea, while War Office artists depicted operations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Exhibitions of these paintings have been held at the National Gallery in London.