

PRESS RELEASE 2011

## The Radev Collection: Bloomsbury and Beyond

1 Oct 2011 – 22 Jan 2012

Pallant House Gallery is delighted to present the first public showing of the Radev Collection which charts the friendships and interests of the Bloomsbury acolyte **Mattei Radev (1927 – 2009)**, the venerated music critic and 5th Lord Sackville **Eddy Sackville-West (1901 – 1965)**, and the artist-dealer **Eardley Knollys (1902 – 1991)**. The collection includes remarkable works by British and international artists including **Keith Vaughan, Duncan Grant, Graham Sutherland, Alfred Wallis, Ivon Hitchens, Maurice Denis, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Jean Metzinger, Jean Millet, Amedeo Modigliani and Lucien Pissarro**.

**Mattei Radev**, who gives his name to the collection, was a Bulgarian emigreé who became a leading picture framer for the London galleries and a feature of artistic and literary Bloomsbury society. The final recipient of the collection, Radev had inherited most of the works from his friend **Eardley Knollys** who had in turn inherited from **Eddy Sackville-West** following the latter's death in 1965. Each man added to the collection and the final selection reflects their differing tastes: Knollys for French artists, and Sackville-West for Modernist pieces. Radev's additions followed in 1991 – most notably works by **Robert Medley** – when he inherited the collection from Knollys, but his greatest gift was to keep the collection intact. Radev's one attempt at selling had resulted in a difficult lesson when, in the 1970s, he sold a superb Modigliani at auction only to see it reappear in a sale in New York for a huge increment.

**Knollys** and **Sackville-West** met in Christ Church, Oxford, briefly becoming lovers, before maintaining a friendship which was to last until Eddy's death in 1965. Knollys was passionate about collecting and from 1936 to 1944 he owned the **Storran Gallery** at Albany Court Yard in London along with his partner Frank Coombs. They put on major shows of Modigliani, Soutine, and exhibited important works by Picasso, selling to major museums. Sackville-West was a regular buyer from the Storran Gallery, amassing several of the works which he was later to leave to Knollys.



Keith Vaughan, Two Male Nudes, 1930

Between 1945 and 1965 Sackville-West and Knollys shared a weekend retreat at **Crichel House** in the Dorset village of Long Crichel, hanging the walls with their combined purchases which were later to become the Radev Collection. Together with the distinguished critics **Raymond Mortimer** (also a collector) and **Desmond Shawe-Taylor**, the group effectively formed a male salon.

**Mattei Radev** was a visitor to the salon too, invited by Knollys whom he had met some time after his arrival in London in 1950, having fled from communism in Bulgaria. Their relationship, like Knollys and Sackville-West's, was fleetingly sexual before settling into a platonic friendship. In the spring of 1960, at Crichel House, Radev met **EM Forster** with whom he embarked on a secretive, somewhat tortured affair. Forster gave Radev **Keith Vaughan's 'Two Male Nudes'** (which had been given to him by **Christopher Isherwood**) and now forms part of the Radev Collection.

Following the death of Sackville-West, Knollys and Radev moved to a new weekend retreat in Hampshire also much frequented by writers and artists. Many of the paintings came with them, although the majority of them transferred to the respective London homes of Knollys and Radev. When Knollys died in 1991, Radev sold their country home but chose to keep the collection together until his death in 2009.

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### INFORMATION | IMAGES | INTERVIEWS

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Tues-Sat 10am-5pm  
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# PALLANT HOUSE GALLERY

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Highlights of the Radev collection include **Gaudier-Brzeska's** sinuous bronze dancing youth 'Bronze Dancer' (1913), **Keith Vaughan's** 'Two Male Nudes' (1930), given to Mattei Radev by EM Forster (who in turn had been given it by Christopher Isherwood), **Ben Nicholson's** 'Carbis Bay' (1945), a group of Pembrokeshire landscapes by **Graham Sutherland** from 1939-40, and a group of works associated with the Camden Town School such as **Spencer Gore's** 'Mornington Crescent', **Lucien Pissarro's** 'Cottage and Haystack in a Landscape' (1915) and **Henry Lamb's** 'Peasant Boy' (c.1920). Other highlights include: **Maurice Denis**' 'Breton Scene' (1905) and 'Figures with Dog by the Shore' (c.1905), **Roderic O'Connor's** 'Pont Aven' (1898) and **Modigliani's** 'Portrait of Soutine',

**Simon Martin**, Curator of Pallant House Gallery says: 'Pallant House Gallery is known as a 'collection of collections', and so to be able to borrow such a remarkable private collection to show in the domestic spaces of the Gallery is very fitting. The story behind the collectors and how these stunning artworks came together is absolutely fascinating. What is more, the collection comprises gems that have not been seen in public for many decades. For Pallant House Gallery to be the first to reveal such hidden treasures to the public is a great pleasure.'

## Notes to Editors:

Following Radev's death in 2009 author **Julian Machin** has been appointed curator of the Collection to ensure that it reaches a wider public.

The online collection will be launched in late September [www.theradevcollection.org](http://www.theradevcollection.org)

The exhibition will tour to four galleries following Pallant House Gallery: Lincoln Art Gallery, The Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, Falmouth Art Gallery, and Abbot Hall Gallery, Kendal.

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