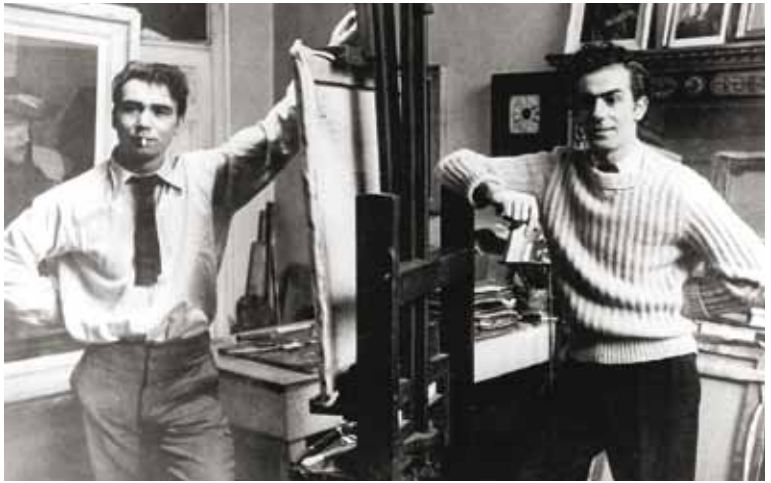


The Roberts







The Roberts

Robert MacBryde (1913-1966) and
Robert Colquhoun (1914-1962)

3 - 31 March 2010

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THE SCOTTISH GALLERY

CONTEMPORARY ART SINCE 1842

Front Cover: Photographs of Robert MacBryde and Robert Colquhoun by John Deakin (1951) courtesy *Vogue*/© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.
Above: Photograph of Robert MacBryde and Robert Colquhoun by Felix Man (1949) Hulton Archive/Getty Images. Bedford Gardens studio.
Left: Robert MacBryde and Robert Colquhoun in Regent Street, London.
Early 1950s: Baron Collection: Hulton Archive

Proceed

CATALOGUE of
Paintings
by
British and French
Artists

Messrs Aitken Dott & Son

in conjunction with Lefevre Galleries, London

at 26 Castle Street, Edinburgh

December

1944

Hours—9 till 12.30

2 till 5

Saturdays 9 till 1

Not to be taken away

Introduction

Whilst doing some research for another exhibition, I found an L S Lowry catalogue from 1944, called 'The Industrial North and its People', held at The Scottish Gallery. It was a chance find with unforeseen consequences. How exactly did the gallery survive during wartime and in particular, what artists did we show and what social and artistic changes could clearly be established? I pulled the entire library apart to find more clues. The result is that I now have too many stories to tell, but on this day I found all the catalogues that belonged to 'The Starks'. They had been collectors of primarily Modern British and Scottish painters, passionate about the arts and lenders of works to important exhibitions in Scotland and the UK between the 1960s - 80s. They left their unique collection of catalogues to the gallery. In particular, I found several relating to the work of Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde. The images immediately struck a chord with me, not easy work but they held my attention and I was drawn in. It was necessary to establish who collected their work, what works the gallery had shown and whether we had exhibited the work during their lifetime. In due course I discovered that a major new book was just months away from being published on their life and work:

"The fruit of over 20 years' original research, *The Last Bohemians* by Roger Bristow is the first biography of two charismatic, talented and ultimately tragic Scottish painters. It re-establishes their reputation as important figures in the history of 20th Century British art. It includes material based on interviews with George Barker, Prunella Clough, John Craxton, Daniel Farson, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Bryan Robertson, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Patrick Heron and Ken Russell.

Born and brought up in Ayrshire to poor, working-class families, Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde met at the Glasgow School

of Art in the 1930s. They moved to London in 1941 and quickly became associated with the Neo-Romantic group of painters which included Keith Vaughan and John Minton. At a time when homosexuality was not only illegal but actively persecuted, they made little attempt to disguise their relationship and they had a constant stream of admirers, both male and female. The circle of friends that grew around them included the painters Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Michael Ayrton, John Minton and the poets George Barker and Dylan Thomas, all attending the regular weekend soirées held by The Roberts at their fashionable Kensington studio."

An exhibition was programmed and the hunt was on to locate works, obtain work for sale and to find out any new information to complement *The Last Bohemians*. During WWII, The Scottish Gallery was not in a confident place. We did little to celebrate our centenary in 1942; deemed inappropriate. Many of our regular artists had disappeared into the army and would not re-emerge until post 1945. We were forced to change and had to risk showing new forms of art and to look beyond Scotland. At that time, the gallery was under the directorship of the immaculate French widow of George Proudfoot and his sister 'Miss Proudfoot'. Together they imported new ideas into the gallery including several 'Scottish Woman Artists' exhibitions, Walter Sickert, L S Lowry and also Alexander Zyw and Josef Herman who had been stationed with Polish regiments in Scotland. In December 1944 and with the aid of the 'entente cordiale' that existed between The Scottish Gallery and Duncan MacDonald of the Lefèvre Gallery, London, we hosted one of the most ambitious exhibitions ever held in the gallery. *Paintings by British and French Artists* included a pantheon of modern British painters and established French artists of the time. From Monet to Matisse, Peplow,

Lowry, Hitchins et al, it included twelve works by Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, whose work, full of angst but impeccably stylish, best summed up the zeitgeist of the time. 'The Golden Boys of Bond Street' who were living in their most successful moment were showing in magnificent company, in The Scottish Gallery. The War was finally turning in our favour and out of the darkness, in the heart of conservative Edinburgh this exhibition must have been regarded as a sparkling moment of enlightenment. A nation was thirsty for culture and a remarkable renaissance in the arts was soon underway finding full expression with the Edinburgh International Festival. Frustratingly, I cannot find more information about the exhibition as the Lefèvre gallery suffered a fire in which their records were lost and one of our precious daybooks was stolen from this period. We therefore have little information about what works were sold and to whom. However, establishing that The Scottish Gallery exhibited the work of Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde during their lifetimes, was an exciting outcome.

The following essays written by Davy Brown and Robin Muir, give us further insight into the life

and work of 'The Roberts.' Davy Brown is a painter and collector. He has been an avid supporter of the artists and has worked tirelessly since the 1960s to keep their names and art alive. Robin Muir is a curator and writer on photography and a consultant to the *Vogue Archives*. Included in this catalogue are photographs of Robert MacBryde and Robert Colquhoun taken by John Deakin and Clifford Coffin which belong to the *Vogue Archives*. Several are reproduced here for the first time, together giving an insight into the rising popularity of the two painters in general and the attention paid to them over the years from unlikely sources.

During the course of the exhibition, we will be showing Ken Russell's BBC television's Monitor programme that was produced in 1959. The book's title *The Last Bohemians* is taken from a quote by Russell in his autobiography 'A British Picture'. "I was able to make a film of those two distant heroes of my early gallery days MacBryde and Colquhoun. It lasted ten minutes and is the most enjoyable film I've ever made. They were great guys. The last of the real Bohemian painters."

Christina Jansen

Director, The Scottish Gallery

Not to be taken away

Catalogue

36-150	1	"Flower-piece" by Keith Baynes	120	31	"Fumaria in a Vase" by André Bauchant
45	2	"Hampton Court" by R. O. Dunlop	30	32	"The Window" by Mark Gertler
500	3	"L'Église de Giverny" by Claude Monet	105	33	"Landscape" by Spencer Gore
250	4	"Carnish Harbour" by Christopher Wood	50	34	"Landscape" by Leslie Hunter
36-150	5	"Flower-piece" by Keith Baynes	80	35	"Park Gates and Drive" by Ivon Hitchens
625	6	"Yachts, Maldon" by Wilson Steer	45	36	"John by Jordan" by Ivon Hitchens
400	7	"Canal, near Rotterdam" by Eugene Boudin	35	37	"Enigma" by Edward Wadsworth
800	8	"Femme Assise" by Henri Matisse	21	38	"Still Life" by Robert MacBryde
105	9	"Romney Marsh" by Harold Gilman	25	39	"Marrow and Fruit" by Robert MacBryde
400	10	"Low Tide, Maldon" by Wilson Steer	14	40	"Seated Figures" by Robert Colquhoun
375	11	"Afternoon, Ronda, Spain" by J. D. Innes	25	41	"Seeded Plants" by Robert Colquhoun
165	12	"Still Life" by S. J. Peploe	21	42	"Still Life" by Robert MacBryde
850	13	"Interieur" by Edmond Vuillard	35	43	"Scottish Dancer" by Robert Colquhoun
1500	14	"La Falaise, Pourville" by Claude Monet	30	44	"Mexican Table and Orange" by Robert MacBryde
325	15	"Hubby and Emily" by Richard Sickert	30	45	"Card Game" by Robert MacBryde
160	16	"Storm Clouds, Iona" by S. J. Peploe	50	46	"September Flowers" by Ivon Hitchens
125	17	"Ceres, Fife" by S. J. Peploe	15	47	"The Red Man" by Robert Colquhoun
150	18	"Head of a Girl" by André Derain	35	48	"Still Life" by Robert MacBryde
45	19	"Tulips" by Duncan Grant	30	49	"Head of a Dancer" by Robert Colquhoun
130	20	"Tulips" by Duncan Grant	30	50	"Leah and Rachel" by Robert Colquhoun
95	21	"Portrait" by Ethel Walker	95	51	"Lime Kilns near Lewes" by Duncan Grant
60	22	"Flowers" by Cathleen Mann	34/4	52	"Invocation" by John Armstrong
150	23	"Interior" by Spencer Gore	325	53	"Environs de St. Tropez" by A. D. de Segonzac
175	24	"The Yellow Dren" by Matthew Smith	200	54	"Effet de Lune" by J. B. Jongkind
400	25	"Ben Cruachan, from Kilmaleet" by Sir D. Y. Cameron	165	55	"Anemones and Daisies" by Matthew Smith
135	26	"Meditation" by Harold Gilman	100	56	"Bolham Valley, Devon" by Robert Bevan
42	27	"Rival Candidates" by L. S. Lowry	105	57	"Mixed Bench" by Ethel Walker
25	28	"The Bandstand, Peel Park" by L. S. Lowry	150	58	"Au Bord de la Mer" by André Bauchant
450	29	"Trouville" by Raoul Dufy	105	59	"Largo, Fife" by Leslie Hunter
150	30	"Sale at Tattersall's" by Robert Bevan	185	60	"Pine Woods" by Harold Gilman
			26-50	61	"Beach Scene" by Leslie Hunter
			45	62	"Interior" by Leslie Hunter



Robert Colquhoun **Two Irish Women** 1946 53.3 x 41.9 cms
Monotype in black and white and three colours. Signed twice and dated. Private Collection.

Time for Reappraisal

I once visited Pont-Aven in Brittany, and there was no Gauguin to be seen, and there are no major works by Cezanne on show in Aix-en-Provence. Similarly, if you are fortunate enough to see a Colquhoun in Kilmarnock, it certainly would not be in the Robert Colquhoun Memorial Gallery, inaugurated by Kilmarnock Town Council in 1972.

To see Colquhoun's work, you would have to visit the Tate Gallery, the Imperial War Museum or the Victoria and Albert in London, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the National Portrait Gallery and the City Art Centre in Edinburgh, G.O.M.A. in Glasgow as well as the major museums of Aberdeen, Dundee, Bradford, Bristol, Manchester and Newcastle. Further abroad his work can be seen in Sydney, New York, Vancouver, Albright, Michigan and the National Gallery of Canada.

I first became aware of Colquhoun (and MacBryde) in September 1962, a few days after he died. I had just begun my secondary schooling that month at Kilmarnock Academy. The principal teacher of art, John McKissock had known the two Roberts at GSA, and was visibly shaken by the news of Colquhoun's untimely death. I immediately became fascinated by the images of the haunting, hollow-eyed women which McKissock placed around the art room – the same room in which Colquhoun had studied back in the 20s and 30s. My life-long love affair with his work had begun.

During the summers of 1969 and 1970, I and two fellow art students created the large scale abstract-expressionist mural on the face of Craigie Quarry near Kilmarnock, and with the romantic fervour of youth, dedicated it to Robert Colquhoun. The ensuing publicity, both local and national (which we neither sought nor encouraged, partly due to fear of litigation), resulted in the then Kilmarnock Town Council initiating the annual Robert Colquhoun Memorial

Art Competition, and the setting up of the Robert Colquhoun Memorial Gallery.

The Mural was blasted into a million pieces to create road metal, the memorial competition barely endured into the 1980s, and the Robert Colquhoun Memorial Gallery at some point quietly disappeared. Two weeks before his death in 1972, Colquhoun's brother John presented me with a lino cut of a female nude for attempting to bring public recognition to his brother. It was my first treasured Colquhoun and is the only lino cut of his I have ever seen. The winner of the first memorial prize in 1972 was a friend, Peter Kleboe. I purchased his winning entry for £25.

The first Colquhoun I bought was from the Mayor Gallery's show which travelled to the Fine Art Society in Edinburgh in 1977. The price of £250 represented almost two months' teachers' salary at the time. I recall seeking the advice of my best friend's mother confessing a fear of being unable to live with myself if I spent so much on an art work. Her response was, "Could you live with yourself if you didn't?" When I telephoned Una Rota to buy it, she said to me, "I knew you would come back for it." Thirty three years on, it remains the favourite piece in my collection (shown opposite) and is the 1946 monotype from which Colquhoun painted "Two Women in Ireland" for the 1958 Whitechapel Retrospective, now in the collection of the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock.

As an antidote to the academic rigours of Glasgow School of Art, I began making painting visits to Cornwall in 1969. These visits continued into the 1980s and brought me into contact with many of the artists of the modern St Ives school, many of whom had known the two Roberts very well, and indeed, almost as one voice, contradicted the common gutter-press view that Colquhoun and MacBryde were little more than drunken self-seeking wasters. Terry Frost spoke to me of them with great fondness, describing

them as “Two wild Scotsmen”, but qualifying it by adding that they would have shared with you their last penny. Wilhelmina Barns-Graham described them as “the kindest and noblest of men”. She spoke to me of how Colquhoun had shown her how to make an improvised “scriber”, in order to create the “carbon-transfer” or “offset” drawings which Jankel Adler had taught him. She demonstrated this to me, and later sold me one of her 1949 Glacier drawings, a fine example of this technique. No one I met during these years who had known the Roberts had a bad word to say about them.

Roger Bristow, in his well researched biography of the two Roberts, *The Last Bohemians* does much to dispel the negative myths surrounding these two talented and committed

artists. It would be encouraging to think that this long-awaited book, along with the recent saleroom prices of around £100 000 for two of Colquhoun’s oils, would trigger the equally long-awaited reappraisal of Colquhoun’s place in Scottish art.

Which brings me back to the beginning; perhaps East Ayrshire Council could take the initiative in this by re-examining its moral obligation to Robert Colquhoun. After all, if a memorial to the fallen in foreign conflicts were to be removed for whatever reason, there would, with considerable justification, be a public outcry. Why are our major artists treated with such contempt?

Davy Brown

Painter and Collector, January 2010



Robert Colquhoun **Head** 1953 Oil on canvas, unsigned 54.6 x 39.4 cms
(Study for 'Three Figures in a Farm Yard'). Private Collection.

Two Bright Guests: Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde in *Vogue*

The fashion magazine *Vogue* was an unexpected supporter of British artists in the early post-war years. Not only did it give notice of and review exhibitions – favourably and usually with insight – it also commissioned illustrations from those considered sympathetic to the spirit of the magazine. Kenneth Rowntree, John Minton, Edward Middleditch, Edwin La Dell, John Craxton, Keith Vaughan, and Leonard Rosoman decorated the literary, recipe and travel pages, while the work of John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Francis Bacon, among others, was subject to greater scrutiny. *Vogue* did not solicit any such contributions from Colquhoun or MacBryde but there is evidence that the idea was briefly discussed.¹ Ink drawings readily made for an advertising agency show that Colquhoun, at least late in life, was not above accepting paid ‘commercial’ work and it might be supposed that their well-documented periods of near-destitution would have softened any inflexibility here.²

The painters were central to two *Vogue* features. The first, ‘Tomorrow’s Names’, appeared in the August 1946 issue and the second, ‘Painters and Pictures’ was part of a special ‘Britannica’ issue of February 1952. Between which times, their reputations had risen steadily and had begun their perceptible (but not yet sharp) decline.

The photographs accompanying the first, made by the American Clifford Coffin, were taken inside 77 Bedford Gardens in the studio they shared with John Minton from 1943 until the autumn of 1946.³ The sitting took place on 3 June 1946, while Minton worked towards a show at Roland, Browse and Delbanco and Colquhoun and MacBryde presumably towards

completing their contribution to *British Painters Past and Present* at the Lefèvre Gallery, which would open the following month.⁴ *Vogue* remarked upon Colquhoun’s successes abroad as the youngest member of a recent touring show of British art. Further, he was ‘one of the young men who are perhaps creating a Scottish Renaissance’.

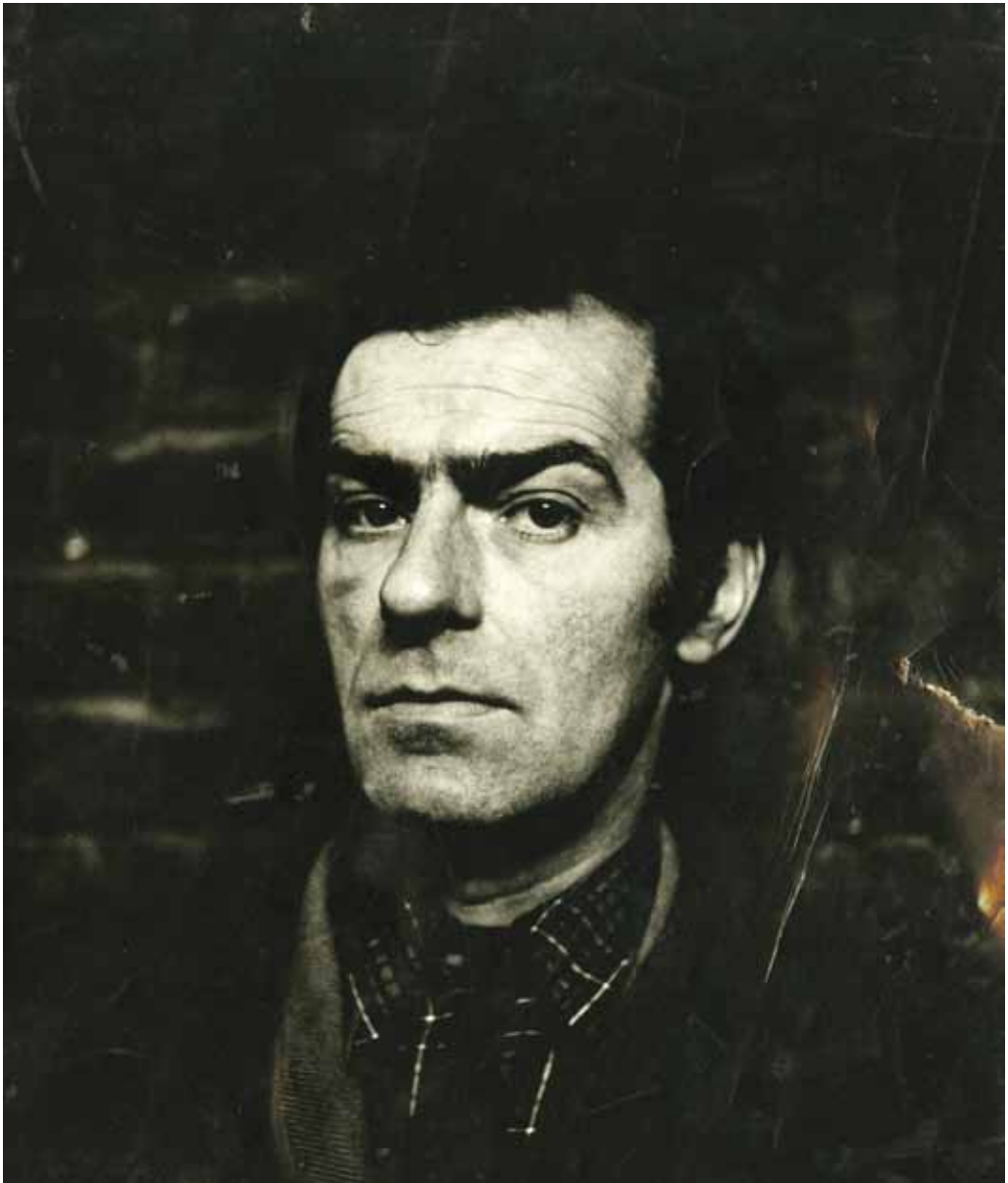
The social whirl around the studios of 77 Bedford Gardens is well documented, having provided colourful material for autobiographers, memoirists and diarists.⁵ By June 1946 the atmosphere there was, at least during daylight hours, one of anguish and jealousy, emotional turbulence and sexual tension – and damaging for John Minton. Usually mournful in formal portraits, he is noticeably anguished in Coffin’s close-ups.⁶ Cedra Osborne observed at first hand the fracturing domestic arrangements:⁷

‘I would not have guessed such intimacy, seeing them together. In spite of his animation and the laughter which always surrounded him, Johnny Minton’s face always had an underlying darkness, and his laughter often seemed to me frenetic. The sharing cannot have been plain sailing...’

Minton left the increasingly chaotic studio to move in with Keith Vaughan around two months after publication of the *Vogue* article. But the disharmony, fuelled and dissipated in equal measure by MacBryde, as several contemporary accounts attest, was richly creative for Colquhoun. The paintings, drawings and monotypes of 1945 and 1946 secured his reputation, among them, arguably, the best known of his life’s work and some of the most monumental in scale. These include *Weaving Army Cloth*, which toured the United States in a British Council exhibition;

Photograph of Robert MacBryde and Robert Colquhoun by Clifford Coffin 1946
courtesy *Vogue*/© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.





Photograph: Robert Colquhoun by John Deakin (1958) Courtesy *Vogue*/© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

Woman with Leaping Cat (1945) and *The Fortune Teller* (1946), both acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1954 and 1976 respectively; *Woman with a Bird Cage* (1945), now in the collection of Bradford Art Galleries and Museums; *Seated Woman with Cat* (1946), an early acquisition by the Arts Council; *The Whistle Seller* (1946), reproduced in the popular weekly magazine *Picture Post* as most representative of Colquhoun's hieratical style and *The Dubliners* (1946), painted towards the end of the year after Minton's departure and a sojourn in Crosshaven, southern Ireland. 1946 found Colquhoun and MacBryde part of a group show at the Lefèvre in the company of Bacon, Freud, Craxton, Nicholson, Sutherland and Julian Trevelyan⁸ and subsequently as part of the gallery's summer show, in which the magisterial *Seated Woman with Cat* was unveiled.⁹ Towards the end of 1946, they were confident enough to scrap with the artist and writer Michael Ayrton over perceived slights in a new book and two subsequent magazine articles.¹⁰

Colquhoun and MacBryde did not avoid personal publicity, despite the former's natural reticence and the latter's perceived subjugation of his own gifts in favour of his partner's.¹¹ MacBryde's volubility on Colquhoun's creative imagination and his selflessness in soliciting approval for it (from whoever might listen), coupled with the novelty of a pair of *émigré* artists working it seemed in domestic harmony, would surely have brought them attention if their paintings had not. They were something perhaps of a curiosity too; two young men who did little to hide the closeness of their private relationship in an age when, outside the rarefied world of the creative arts, overt homosexuality – still illegal – was rarely tolerated. Further, in their early London years, the Lefèvre's Duncan MacDonald promoted both assiduously (his death in 1949 robbed them of a champion and an occasional banker).

As their popularity increased, their domestic life fragmented the more. At the height of their fame, in 1947, they were evicted from 77 Bedford

Gardens. Without the financial support of John Minton this had looked inevitable. An increasing dependency on alcohol, which fuelled the anecdotes of friends and enemies, also led to a straitening of their meagre finances. Although their success continued, they would never again experience the security – and the bonhomie of fellow painters upon which they thrived – that Bedford Gardens had given them. Though small and sparsely furnished, their studio, as the *Vogue* photographs disclosed, was filled with light and the evidence, in stacked paintings and prints, of work at least being made and exhibition deadlines appearing to be honoured.

Photographs of the two painters appeared in mass-circulation weeklies as well as specialised literary and fine art periodicals. The much-reproduced double portrait by the German Felix H. Man appeared first in *Picture Post* in 1949, affording both painters the opportunity to explain their artistic vision.¹² Variants from Man's series had been published in the less widely available *Penguin New Writing* in 1948, unexpectedly optimistic portraits (Colquhoun manages a rare half-smile), and flatteringly retouched before reproduction.¹³ An unpublished out-take confirms Anthony Cronin's vivid observation of MacBryde's 'mobile rubber features of the clown, or perhaps of some sophisticated, disillusioned rather tired French cabaret artist'.¹⁴

They also sat for the magazine photographer Roland Haupt. In *Harper's Bazaar*, another fashion magazine and *Vogue's* best-selling rival, Robert Colquhoun was singled out in 1947 among others as 'Above the Crowd' with a photograph credited to 'Rolf'.¹⁵ Further evidence of their ubiquity and newsworthiness: the two painters were the subject of a humorous couplet, a runner-up in the *New Statesman and Nation's* Weekend Competition.¹⁶

The Roberts' appeared in *Vogue* for the second time in the issue of February 1952 for which they were photographed at the magazine's studios in central London on 19 November 1951. *Vogue* was celebrating 'Britishness', prompted

perhaps by the imminent closure of the Festival of Britain. Colquhoun and MacBryde's inclusion in 'Painters and Pictures', a selection of British artists by writer and critic Michael Middleton, is surprising, not least because their fortunes as painters had taken a step back. The decline was by no means terminal but they were no longer perceived to be 'The Golden Boys of Bond Street'. One commentator – sympathetic – identified retrospectively that at this time a crisis in Colquhoun's painting had turned into 'an insoluble impasse'.¹⁷ David Sylvester, previously admiring of an artist who 'made a particular conception of mankind his own', reviewed *Recent Paintings by Robert Colquhoun*, which had opened at the Lefèvre in December 1950. He was blunt, referring to 'his lost form', and 'decline' and the 'gratuitous ghoulishness' of his figure work.¹⁸ With no Duncan Macdonald to support their interests, the commercial failure of this show led to the termination of the painters' eight-year relationship with the Lefèvre Gallery.

What might have prompted *Vogue* and Middleton was news of The Roberts' latest project: set design and costumes for a new Léonide Massine ballet, yet to open as the magazine went to press. *Donald of the Burthens* was set in a Dark Age, pre-tartan Scotland, a thanatopsis with Death danced by Beryl Grey. *Vogue's* prescience was rewarded. The first night reviews were positive and several singled out the costumes and set design. *Vogue* – and presumably Middleton – had not hesitated to praise Colquhoun as emerging from the War as 'the most promising painter of his generation' nor MacBryde, whose 'rich and sonorous colour' was judged 'more appealing' and 'his shapes more decorative' than his fellow traveller Colquhoun. 'Painters and Pictures' featured the work of seventeen artists, with sixteen photographed. Of these, eleven portraits – Colquhoun and MacBryde included – were specially commissioned from *Vogue's* maverick photographer John Deakin. Despite other more established and reliable names at the magazine,

Deakin was the obvious choice. Part of the intimate circle around Bacon and Freud and counting Minton as a friend, Craxton and Robert Medley as acquaintances and Keith Vaughan a wary associate, Deakin had personal contact with the London art world. Only with Bacon did he meet with difficulty, but eventually persuaded his friend to sit. Taken on 15 January 1952, the portrait was too late for inclusion in *Vogue's* February issue. The only print to survive from the encounter with this mercurial subject is a torn and dog-eared example, probably the best known of all Deakin's photographs.¹⁹ His full-frame portraits were memorably described by his friend Daniel Farson as 'mug shots taken by a real artist'.²⁰ Deakin's finished prints were mostly 16" x 12" in size but shrunk drastically for the magazine, where their impact is mostly lost. The unpublished variants of his session with Colquhoun and MacBryde are haunting. Like them, Deakin was an habitu  of the pubs and clubs of Soho, conveniently near to the *Vogue* studios in Shaftesbury Avenue, though the Roberts brief exile in the Essex countryside had made their visits rare. Deakin is known to have visited them and made an intimate vignette of MacBryde asleep against Colquhoun's shoulder, which, uncharacteristically gentle for Deakin, reinforces their inseparability.²¹

The success of their first venture into the performing arts appeared to be a brief respite from a steady decline. The Roberts had been, in their eyes, badly treated by the judges of the Arts Council's 60 for '51 project, which had resulted in no commissions being passed their way. Further designs for a stage production of *King Lear* did not repeat the success of *Donald of the Burthens*. Judging by the exhibitions that took place in 1952, it appears that monotypes, lithographs and drawings preoccupied them and neither produced new paintings of any weight until Colquhoun's striking, naturalistic and large-scale *Figures in a Farmyard* (1953).²²

When the Roberts returned from Essex to London and reacquainted themselves with Soho life, their decline accelerated. Photographs

from this period show Colquhoun's solemn and saturnine looks had diminished to hollow-cheeked gauntness. Daniel Farson's snapshot of Colquhoun waiting on the steps for the Golden Lion pub to open, suggests that a hand-to-mouth existence now pre-occupied the pair.²³ Salvation of a kind appeared in 1957: the offer to Colquhoun of a retrospective exhibition for the following year at the Whitechapel Galley, London. The offer made by the gallery's shrewd and encouraging director Bryan Robertson, came with a proviso: that some twenty works be new paintings. It was hoped that this would provide the impetus for a fresh start. *Robert Colquhoun. An Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Prints 1942 - 1958* opened in spring 1958 to mostly heartening reviews. John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery, recalled visiting it:²⁴

'Although I had long admired his work - we had bought *The Woman with a Leaping Cat* for the Tate four years before I realized I had not recognised his full stature. There I met Colquhoun and MacBryde, for the first time sober. When I spoke to Colquhoun of the deep impression made on me by his assembled work, he made no reply, but simply looked at me gravely and I could see tears in his eyes which said as clearly as any words that if he and circumstances had been different he might have achieved infinitely more...'

Vogue, ever the champion, did not let the occasion pass it by. It would be the last time either Colquhoun or MacBryde appeared in the magazine. Above a brief encomium, which doubled therefore as a valediction, ran a new and striking portrait by Deakin.²⁵ In finishing the print Deakin had increased the contrast to its grainiest, reduced any nuance in the background to deepest black. In so doing he left only the proud, impassive, monolithic face of this, in *Vogue*'s words, 'fine cabbalistic painter of ordinary people'.

Robin Muir

West Sussex, February 2010

Footnotes

- 1 Alex Kroll, conversation with author, 2002. Kroll was *Vogue*'s joint art director during the war years and after. He recalls that the idea of commissioning RC was raised around 1949/1950 and again later in the decade by Robert Harling, editor of *Vogue*'s sister publication *House & Garden* (Kroll was subsequently his art director). A small item on RMac's designs for S.S. *Oronsay* appeared in 'Roundabout' *House & Garden* August 1951
- 2 Oliver Bernard, conversation with author, 1999. These drawings were commissioned by Bernard around 1959 though they were never used. They now form part of the collection of The City Art Centre, Edinburgh. See also Bernard's notes to cat. *Paintings and Drawings by Robert Colquhoun* (Norwich School of Art Gallery, October - November 1978). It could be further argued that RC and RMac's set design and costumes for the ballet *Donald of the Burthenes* (1951) and *King Lear* (1953) constituted 'commercial' work.
- 3 The *Vogue* feature was a double-page spread. Accompanying the two painters were tomorrow's other names: the neophyte actor Ronald Howard; the physician and poet Alex Comfort and the 21-year-old theatre dynamo Peter Brook.
- 4 *British Painters Past and Present* (The Lefèvre Gallery, July - August 1946)
- 5 Among many others: Anthony Cronin, Daniel Farson, Michael Hamburger, Bernard Kops, John Heath-Stubbs, Julian Maclaren-Ross, Paul Potts and William Townshend.
- 6 The frame selected for publication is the one 'pulled back' the most i.e. taken at the greatest distance from the subject.
- 7 Cedra Osborne 'The Roberts' *The London Magazine* April/May 1993
- 8 *Recent Paintings by Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland and Francis Bacon, Robert Colquhoun, John Craxton, Lucian Freud, Robert MacBryde, Julian Trevelyan* (The Lefèvre Gallery, February 1946)
- 9 *British Painters Past and Present* op. cit no.7
- 10 Michael Ayrton *British Drawings* from the series 'Britain in Pictures' (Collins, 1946); Michael Ayrton 'The Heritage of British Painting IV - Resurgence' *The Studio* November 1946; Michael Ayrton 'Some Young British Contemporary Painters' *Orion* (3rd vol) 1946. See also the cache of

- increasingly volatile letters to Ayrton from both RC and RMac held in Tate Archives.
- 11 For example, *Vogue* could find nothing to say about RMac in 1946 other than he had 'travelled step-by-step with Colquhoun'.
 - 12 *Picture Post* March 12 1949. In the case of RMac, it is one of the few occasions that he articulated in print his 'pictorial logic' – or was given the chance to.
 - 13 'Portraits of Contemporary British Painters' *Penguin New Writing* 35 (ed. John Lehmann, 1948). Felix Man's (Hans Baumann) other subjects were Robert Medley, John Craxton, John Minton, Leonard Rosoman, Keith Vaughan and Lucian Freud (all of whom would surface in *Vogue*'s 'Painters and their Pictures', 1952. Man's photographs, including prints of RC and RMac, form part of the Collection of The National Portrait Gallery (nos. x11801 and x11802).
 - 14 Anthony Cronin *Dead as Doornails* (Dolmen Press/Calder and Boyars, 1976)
 - 15 'Above the Crowd' *Harper's Bazaar* January/February 1947.
 - 16 "Here's a trick we've not tried, MacBryde"/ "We'll be trying it soon, Colquhoun" Weekend Competition 982 *New Statesman and Nation* 1 January 1949
 - 17 Bryan Robertson 'The Tragic Vision of Robert Colquhoun' *The Listener* 6 December 1962
 - 18 A. D. B Sylvester, 'Robert Colquhoun' *Art News and Review* 16 December 1950
 - 19 It is now in the collection of The Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The negatives remain with the *Vogue* Archive, London
 - 20 Daniel Farson *Out of Step* (Michael Joseph, 1974) In the eyes of many, Deakin's reputation as one of the greatest of post war portraitists rests upon these assignments (all taken between November 1951 and January 1952). The 11-strong list of published portraits comprises Robert Colquhoun, John Craxton, William Gear, Patrick Heron, Robert MacBryde, Robert Medley, John Minton, Ceri Richards, Leonard Rosoman, William Scott and Keith Vaughan.
 - 21 The surviving vintage print belonged to Elizabeth Smart and by descent to the Barker family. Sold at auction in 2008 it now forms part of the John Deakin Archive, London. It is to be the jacket image for Roger Bristow's forthcoming double biography *The Last Bohemians* (Sansom & Co., 2010)
 - 22 Now in the collection of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (GMA 1306) it had been shown first in 'Figures in their Setting', a show organised at the Tate Gallery by the Contemporary Arts Society in 1953.
 - 23 Illustrated in Daniel Farson, *Soho in the Fifties* (Michael Joseph, 1987)
 - 24 John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters III* (Macdonald, 1974). He saw the exhibition on 9 April 1958
 - 25 'People are Talking About' *Vogue* April 1958. It is likely that *Vogue*'s print relates to another held by The National Portrait Gallery (P295)

Photograph: Robert MacBryde and Robert Colquhoun by John Deakin 1951
 Courtesy *Vogue*/© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.





Robert Colquhoun **Head Study** c. 1953
Oil Painting on canvas, laid on mahogany 21.5 x 17.2 cms
Purchased in 1997 for The Fleming-Wyfold Art Foundation, London



Robert Colquhoun **Festa: Settignano** 1950 Oil on canvas, signed 61 x 51 cms
Provenance *Recent Paintings by Robert Colquhoun* The Lefèvre Gallery, December 1950 cat. No. 14



Robert Colquhoun **The Necromancer** 1949
Monotype with hand working and pencil on cream wove paper
Signed and dated lower right, inscribed with title in margin. 56 x 45.2 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Men with Walking Sticks (also known as Glasgow Beggars)** c. 1953
Offset drawing: Oil on paper 39.5 x 28.5 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Cornish Woman with Goat** 1948
Lithograph. No 2 from the edition of 8. Signed and dated in pencil lower right.
35.3 x 26 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Mysterious Figures** 1960
Lithograph with hand colouring. Signed and inscribed 'Sketch for Lithograph' in pencil.
Image: 40 x 53.5 cms. Paper: 50 x 63 cms (paper is supported by cardboard backing)



Robert MacBryde **Still Life with Calf's Head** Oil on Canvas c. 1948
Signed. Private Collection. 71.1 x 91.4 cms



Robert MacBryde **Sliced Cucumbers in a Dish** c. 1948
Oil on canvas, signed. Private Collection. 55.5 x 40.5 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Woman with Cat** 1948
Lithograph, signed lower right 38 x 26.5 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Four illustrations to a Poem: Dedicated to Nessie Dunsmuir** 1955
 Pencil and watercolour 95 x 69 cms

Colquhoun and MacBryde met Nessie Dunsmuir, wife of the poet Sydney Graham, through John Minton who took them to Marazion in Cornwall where the Grahams owned two gypsy caravans. Here, Colquhoun made the preliminary studies for his 1948 paintings of women with Cornish goats. Colquhoun remained friendly with Sydney Graham and Nessie Dunsmuir for the rest of his life.



Robert MacBryde **The Clown** 1950 (from an edition of 50) Lithograph signed in pencil 52 x 40 cms

“MacBryde showed an intuitive understanding of the print-making process. Each was made in three colours and utilised the printing ink’s transparency to overprint on each other, greatly increasing the print’s chromatic range”¹



Robert MacBryde **Still Life on a Table** 1960 (edition 7 out of 30) Lithograph signed in pencil 50 x 35 cms

"*Still Life I* was part of a series commissioned by Robert Erskine at the St George's Gallery and this was one of the last prints that MacBryde ever made. "The work is a typical MacBryde still-life composition and includes a large, halved citrus fruit on the tabletop. The fruit is sitting on what appears to be a bed of crumpled paper. This may have been a fruit wrapper with the word 'CAPE' on it, a common sight when South African fruit was supplied in great quantities to Britain... the prints were successfully completed and copies of their six prints now form part of the Tate Britain's print collection."²

1, 2 extracts from *The Last Bohemians* by Roger Bristow



Top: Robert Colquhoun **Three Female Nude Studies** 1939 Pen and sepia ink 24 x 35 cms
Above: Robert Colquhoun **Nadia** 1939 Pen and sepia ink 32.5 x 24 cms

The travelling scholarships which the two Roberts received from Glasgow School of Art in 1938 saw them in Paris immediately prior to the outbreak of war. There they had enrolled immediately in the famous Academie Julian where they continued to study the human figure, but with a looser, more fluid handling than their sketches in Glasgow. This more linear approach was due to the influence of Jamie Cowie at Hospitalfield and of Wyndham Lewis. The majority of the French studies, including the sheets of 'Three Female Nude Studies' and 'Nadia' were made in pen and ink.



Robert Colquhoun **Female Nude: Three Back Studies** 1939 Pen and sepia ink 30 x 23 cms



Clockwise from top left:

Robert Colquhoun **Woman with Arm Raised** 1956 Pen and ink 24 x 18 cms

Robert Colquhoun **Horseman (3)** c. 1956 Pen and ink 24 x 18 cms

Robert Colquhoun **Fallen Horse** c. 1948-51 Carbon drawing 23 x 20 cms

Robert Colquhoun **Warrior** c. 1956 Pen and ink 24 x 18 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Woman in Costume** c. 1938 Red Conte 52 x 36 cms

Colquhoun met MacBryde at Glasgow School of Art in 1933, becoming life long partners until Colquhoun's death in 1962. They gained prizes for drawing, post-diploma awards and travelling scholarships to Europe in 1938/39. 'Woman in Costume' dates from Colquhoun's third or fourth year at Glasgow School of Art.



Robert Colquhoun **Bird, Costume Design for King Lear** c. 1953 Pencil and ink on paper 11 x 8.5 cms



Designs for Massine's Scottish ballet *Donald of the Burthens* produced by Sadler's Wells, Covent Garden in 1951. Clockwise from top left:

Robert Colquhoun **The Piper** c. 1948-51 Carbon drawing 23 x 20 cms

Robert Colquhoun **Spear Carrier** c. 1948-51 Carbon drawing 23 x 20 cms

Robert Colquhoun **Head of a Clansman** c. 1948-51 Carbon drawing 23 x 20 cms

Robert Colquhoun **A Swordsman** c. 1948-51 Carbon drawing 23 x 20 cms



Left and right: Robert MacBryde **Life Studies** c. 1938 Charcoal on paper 29.5 x 23 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Negress** c.1939 Crayon and black ink 25 x 20 cms



Robert Colquhoun **Figure with Dog** c. 1954 Crayon 24 x 28 cms

From 1950-54, Colquhoun and MacBryde lived in Tilty Mill, near Dunmow in Essex, the home of Elizabeth Smart, who provided them with accommodation and studio space in exchange for looking after her four children. This was a fruitful period for Colquhoun, producing his great painting 'Three Figures in a Farmyard', now in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, his costume designs for 1953 Stratford-upon-Avon production of King Lear, with Michael Redgrave as Lear, and many superb monotypes mainly depicting two figures, or a single figure with a farm animal. This work, and 'Glasgow Beggars' date from this period.



Robert Colquhoun **Thorn Head** 1959 Brush and ink 48 x 38 cms

In 1959, Oliver Bernard, who was then working for an advertising agency, commissioned Colquhoun to produce a series of drawings for an engineering company. The drawings were ultimately rejected by the company, but Bernard paid Colquhoun for them. The majority of these drawings are now in the City Art Centre, Edinburgh. This drawing belongs to the series.



Photographs of Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde by Clifford Coffin (1946) Courtesy *Vogue*/© The Condé Nast Publications Ltd.

Robert Colquhoun (1914-1962)

1914	Born in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire		
1926	Kilmarnock Academy, much influenced by the head art teacher, James Lyle		
1929	Left school and became an apprentice at an engineering concern to help his parents during the Depression. James Lyle gained help from Sir Alexander Walker and the Rev. James Hamilton with the result that Colquhoun was able to continue his studies and win a scholarship to Glasgow School of Art	1948	Sir Kenneth Clark and Sir Colin Anderson suggest to Leonide Massine that he approach 'the Roberts' with the idea that they design the décor and costumes for the ballet <i>Donald of the Burthens</i>
1933	Met Robert MacBryde at Glasgow School of Art	1949	Visit to Italy. Set of six lithographs of the Italian scene completed for Miller's Press. Death of his great friend and supporter, Duncan MacDonald, a Director of the Lefèvre Gallery, who also acted as a sort of banker to 'the Roberts'
1937-39	Travelling Scholarships to France and Italy with MacBryde	1950	Moves with MacBryde to the rented home of Elizabeth Smart at Tilty Mill, Dunmow, Essex
1940	Painted with MacBryde in Ayrshire. Called up and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, stationed at Edinburgh and Leeds	1951	<i>Donald of the Burthens</i> produced at Covent Garden
1942	After settling in London, became a Civil Defence Ambulance Driver. Their studio at Bedford Gardens became the meeting place for the writers, poets and painters of the period	1953	<i>King Lear</i> produced at Stratford, with designs for décor and costumes by Colquhoun
1943	Struck up a friendship with Jankel Adler. John Minton moves into Bedford Gardens. First one man show at the Lefèvre Gallery. Met the poets George Barker and Sydney Graham	1954	'The Roberts' return to London from Essex
1945	Painting of <i>Women weaving Army Cloth</i> purchased by War Artists' Advisory Commission	1958	Visit to Southern France on the proceeds of the exhibition
1946	Began experimenting with monotypes. Visited Ireland	1959	'The Roberts' spend more and more time in the pubs and clubs of Soho and gradually Colquhoun's health declines
1947	'The Roberts' move to Lewes, Sussex, under the patronage of Frances Byng	1962	Dies of heart disease, while working on a drawing of a man dying
		1972	Colquhoun Memorial Art Gallery opened in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire

Solo Exhibitions

- 1943 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1944 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1947 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1950 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1951 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1957 Parton Gallery
- 1958 Whitechapel Gallery (retrospective)
- 1962 Museum Street Galleries (posthumous)

Group Exhibitions

- 1942 Six Scottish Painters, Lefèvre Gallery
- 1944 Paintings by British and French Artists, Lefèvre Gallery, London and The Scottish Gallery (Mssrs Aitken Dott and Son Ltd)
- 1946 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1948 Modern British Painting, Lefèvre Gallery
- 1949 Paintings by Contemporary British and French Artists, Lefèvre Gallery
- 1951 60 Paintings for 1951, Arts Council Exhibition
- 1951 Designs for *Donald of the Burthens*, Redfern Gallery
- 1953 Figures in their Setting, Contemporary Art Society
- 1956 The Seasons Exhibition, Contemporary Art Society
- 1959 Kaplan Gallery (with Robert MacBryde)

Décor and Costume Designs

- 1951 Covent Garden, *Donald of the Burthens*, choreography by Leonide Massine
- 1953 Stratford, *King Lear* produced by George Devine

Book Illustrations

Poems of Sleep and Dream chosen by Carol Stewart, published by Frederick Muller Ltd, with sixteen colour lithographs.

(Robert Colquhoun's biography is a selection of exhibitions held during his lifetime, compiled from the Robert Colquhoun memorial exhibition March 1963, Douglas and Foulis Gallery, Edinburgh and from The Mayor Gallery Memorial exhibition, March 1977)

Robert MacBryde (1913-1966)

- 1913 Born in Maybole, Ayrshire
After leaving school worked for five years in a factory
- 1933-37 Attended Glasgow School of Art, met Robert Colquhoun
- 1937-39 Visited France and Italy with Colquhoun
- 1939 Returns to Ayrshire with Colquhoun; both work at Colquhoun's grandparents' home at Netherton in a studio-hut
- 1940 Exempt from service being tubercular, but follows Colquhoun to Edinburgh and Leeds where he is serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps
- 1942 Shares a studio with Colquhoun, to be joined in 1943 by Jankel Adler and John Minton
- 1947 Makes monotypes and lithographs at the Miller's Press, Lewes
- 1948 Begins work on designs for *Donald of the Burthens*
- 1949 Visits Italy with Colquhoun
- 1950 Moves with MacBryde to the rented home of Elizabeth Smart at Tilty Mill, Dunmow, Essex
- 1951 Production of *Donald of the Burthens*
- 1954 Returns to London
- 1958 Visits Southern France
- 1959 Move from one flat to another, health declining
- 1962 The death of Robert Colquhoun
- 1966 After moving to Dublin, he is run over by a car and killed

Solo Exhibitions

- 1943 Lefèvre Gallery

Group Exhibitions

- 1942 Six Scottish Painters, Lefèvre Gallery
- 1944 Paintings by British and French Artists, Lefèvre Gallery, London and The Scottish Gallery (Mssrs Aitken Dott and Son Ltd)
- 1946 Lefèvre Gallery
- 1951 Designs for *Donald of the Burthens*, Redfern Gallery
- 1954 Abstract, Cubist, Formalist, Sur-Realist, Redfern Gallery
- 1954 Summer Exhibition, Redfern Gallery
- 1957 Crane Gallery, Manchester
- 1957 French and English Pictures from the Crane Gallery, Liverpool Art Gallery
- 1958 Crane Kalman Gallery
- 1959 Kaplan Gallery (with Robert Colquhoun)

Décor and Costume Designs

- 1951 Covent Garden, *Donald of the Burthens*, choreography by Leonide Massine

(Robert MacBryde's biography is a selection of exhibitions held during his lifetime compiled from The Mayor Gallery Memorial exhibition, March 1977)

Acknowledgements

David Archer, Austin Desmond Fine Art, London

Roger Bristow, author of *The Last Bohemians*

Born in 1943 and educated in Kingston, Surrey. A graduate of Kingston School of Art, where he trained as a graphic designer and illustrator, he worked in book publishing for many years and as an art director for several leading companies. Now living in Cornwall, he is able to devote himself to writing and has become an acknowledged expert on British art of the 1940s and 1950s by art galleries and collectors alike. He is the author of a monograph on the artist Rigby Graham entitled *Rigby Graham Monotypes*.

Davy Brown, artist and collector

The family of Robert Colquhoun

Robin Muir, curator and writer on photography. Consultant to the *Vogue Archives*

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THE SCOTTISH GALLERY

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These, lull'd by Nightingales, imbraceing slept,
And on thir naked limbs the flourie roof
Showrd Roses, which the Morn repair'd. Sleep on,
Blest pair; and O yet happiest if ye seek
No happier state, and know to know no more.

Extract from *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (1608-1674)
From *Poems of Sleep and Dream*
Chosen by Carol Stewart
with Lithographs by Robert Colquhoun
Published by Frederick Muller Ltd in 1947



Colquhoun and MacBryde gatecrashed on the dance at about one in the morning. The students let them in and they floundered and argued about the school for some time. Then they appeared in Bill's room where several of us were gathered about the drinks on the table. Both were fairly well dazed, but glad to have more drinks and fairly amiable until, as the party broke up, MacBryde shouted "Come on out of this, Robert, don't let the bloody English get hold of you. Come along out I say." And they bundled off..

15 December, 1949, an entry in *The Townsend Journals*,
William Townsend, Tate Gallery Publications, 1976

Photography by John Deakin, c. 1953

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The Roberts | The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh | March 2010