

Pop and the Figure
Large labels



Pop and the Figure

8 May – 3 November 2026

This exhibition showcases Pallant House Gallery's major Pop Art collection through the lens of the body. In the 1950s and 1960s there was a radical return to figuration in British art, inspired by an increased fascination with popular culture and everyday images found in the mass media. This was a period of upheaval and reinvention, which saw the end of postwar austerity, the escalation of the Cold War, rising civil rights and feminist movements, revolution and decolonisation, and a rise in youth culture. These rapidly changing times drove artists to seek new subject matter in their work, as a way to respond to the world around them.

Pop and the Figure brings together works by artists including Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton, Jann Haworth, and Colin Self, whose approach to the figure encapsulated the spirit of an era through themes such as celebrity, social liberation, the threat of nuclear war, and the seductive imagery of advertising.

Room 2

Peter Blake (b. 1932)

Girls with their Hero



1959-62

Oil on hardboard

Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)

Peter Blake describes himself as an enthusiastic fan of popular culture, which has been a source of inspiration since his student days in the late 1950s. Here, Blake captures the emotional intensity of the fans' adulation for the pop star Elvis Presley. At the bottom of the painting, Blake imitates a pinboard full of pop memorabilia, including record sleeves, posters and signed photographs. As an avid collector himself, Blake recognises the symbolic power of these objects and how they connect fans to their idols.

Sue Dunkley (1942 – 2022)

Untitled (Gilbert & George [Pink])

1969



Oil on canvas

Accepted in Lieu of inheritance tax by HM Government 2025 and on loan to Pallant House Gallery pending a decision on permanent allocation.

Sue Dunkley's paintings often explore the nature of relationships through representations of famous figures in mass media. Here, Dunkley portrayed the artists Gilbert & George in their first performance as 'singing sculptures' with their faces made to look like bronze. In this work, Dunkley identified early on what would become a key aspect of their artistic identity. Fascinated by the duo's self-presentation, Dunkley painted two versions of this painting.

Room 3

Pauline Boty (1938 - 1966)

Untitled (Seascape with Boats and Island)

c.1960

Collage on paper

Purchased with support from Art Fund (2019)



This early collage by Pauline Boty was made whilst she was studying at the Royal College of Art in London, where she started to make works responding to the cultural revolution of the 1960s. In this pastiche of the low budget horror film, *Attack of the 50ft Woman*, small boats flee a gargantuan woman on land. Sourcing her imagery from Victorian wood engraving, Boty makes a comment on British men's dominance over the sea, through using material from an era defined by imperial power.

R.B. Kitaj (1932 - 2007)

Priest, Deckchair and Distraught
Woman

1961

Oil on canvas



Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)

R.B. Kitaj's paintings are drawn from a wide range of literary, political, religious, and art historical references. This work references art historian Aby Warburg (an influential figure on British Pop) and his idea of the 'Nympha', here represented by the 'Distraught Woman'. Warburg's 'Nympha' represents both a divine and demonic female figure in motion, a recurrent motif in Renaissance painting.

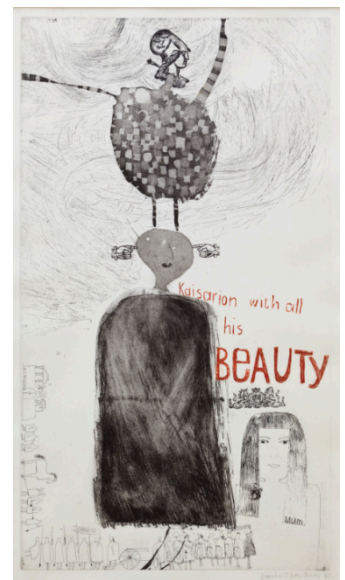
David Hockney (b. 1937)

Kaisarion with All His Beauty

1961

Hard ground etching and aquatint on paper

Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government from the estate of MJ Long / Wilson and allocated to Pallant House Gallery (2021)



Words and phrases played a prominent role in David Hockney's early work, the graffiti-style texts often making autobiographical references. His approach to the figure was influenced by the French artist Jean Dubuffet, who worked outside of established conventions in culture and taste. *Kaisarion with All His Beauty* is an early reference to the Greek poet C.P. Cavafy, whose works would have a profound influence on Hockney

Gerald Laing (1936 - 2011)

Starlet from 'Baby Baby Wild Things
and Brigitte Bardot'

1968

Screenprint on paper

Purchased with Support from Art Fund
and Private Donors (2018)



Gerald Laing was drawn to publicity images, reproducing and enlarging the half-tone effect (a printing

technique made up of small dots) within his screenprints. Through this technique, Laing draws our attention to the artificiality of the image, which in turn objectifies the subject of the print, here a model in a bikini. Whilst women's liberation movements flourished in the 1960s, sexually objectifying images persisted, particularly in advertising.

Claes Oldenburg (1929-2022)

London Knees

1966-68

Polyurethane-coated latex with acrylic base



Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by HM Government from the estate of MJ Long / Wilson and allocated to Pallant House Gallery (2021)

Claes Oldenburg created large-scale installations of everyday objects such as items of clothing or food, as he wished to break down the barrier between art and

life. In the mid-1960s, he created a 21-print portfolio in parallel with the sculpture. He was fascinated by the recent fashion for miniskirts and go-go boots that epitomised the sexual liberation of youth culture in 1960s London. He noted how 'revolutionary this paradoxical combination of masculine voyeurism and feminine liberation seemed in its time.'

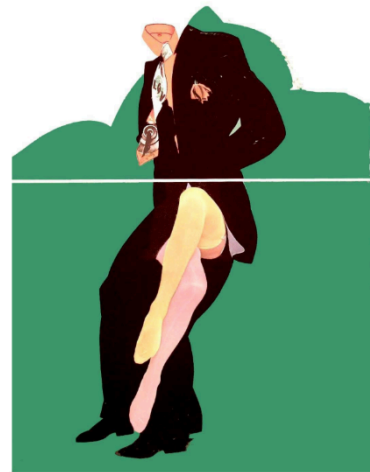
Allen Jones (b. 1937)

Life Class C

1968

Coloured lithograph on paper

Presented by the Artist (2018)



This lithograph is part of a series by Allen Jones created as a comment on the changing attitude towards life drawing classes in art schools during the 1960s. The lithographs were designed in such a way that you could choose which half – the upper body or the lower body – go together, introducing a playful element to the work. Jones' *Life Class* also comments on the construction of images within the mass media, whilst this version nods to a more fluid concept of gender.



Room 4

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924 - 2005)

I was a Rich Man's Plaything, from
BUNK

1947-1972

Screenprint on paper

Wilson Gift through Art Fund



This screenprint is based on a collage Eduardo Paolozzi made in the late 1940s, a work which is now considered one of the first Pop art images. It is made up of clippings from American magazines and advertisements Paolozzi collected, many given to him by American ex-servicemen stationed in Paris, where he was based at the time. The juxtaposition of flashy images can be seen to reflect the atmosphere of the time, with mass media and consumerism on the rise.

Jann Haworth (b. 1942)

Mae West Dressing Table

1965

Mixed media

Wilson Family Loan (2006)



Growing up in Hollywood as the daughter of a production designer in the 1940s and 1950s, Jann Haworth was able to go behind the scenes to see actors [in their dressing rooms] prepare before going on set. Haworth chose the movie star Mae West as her subject, attracted by her complex character. For Haworth, mirrors have a transformative potential, whilst also setting up a direct relationship with the viewer, who can see themselves within its reflection.

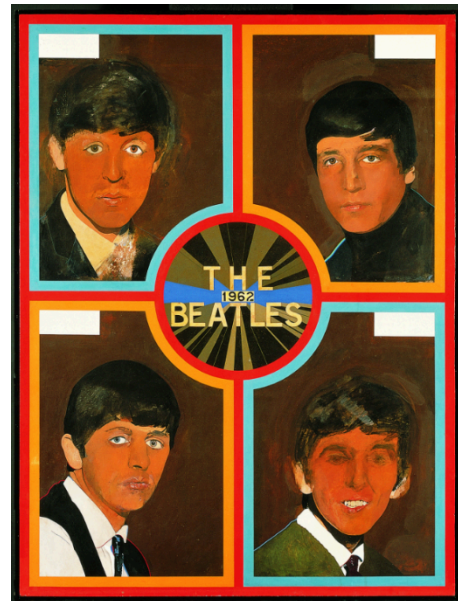
Peter Blake (b. 1932)

The Beatles, 1962

1963-68

Acrylic emulsion on hardboard

Wilson Gift through Art Fund
(2006)



Peter Blake met The Beatles in the early 1960s, before they attained super-stardom in 1963. This group portrait belongs to a series on pop musicians, also including Bo Diddley and The Lettermen, as part of Blake's exploration of celebrity and fandom. Here, Blake took inspiration from the design of record sleeves and fan magazines through his use of colourful borders. The white boxes in the top left corners were left blank for The Beatles' autographs.

Jann Haworth (b. 1942)

Cowboy

1964

Kapok and unbleached calico

Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)



Please do not touch

The American cowboy is an enduring motif in Hollywood films, which has in recent years been reconsidered through a more contemporary lens, raising issues of gender, identity and social history. Jann Haworth recalls seeing her first rodeo in 1956 and, for her, the rodeo cowboy is a 'fossil of the imperfect/perfect Great American Myth.' *Cowboy* is one of her earliest soft-sculpture figures, depicting a macho subject in a material commonly perceived as feminine.

Eduardo Paolozzi (1924 - 2005)



Standing Figure

c.1958

Bronze sculpture

Wilson Loan (2006)

In the late 1950s, Eduardo Paolozzi made sculptures by pressing pieces of found objects into a clay mould, from which he produced bronze casts. The outlines of these objects are assembled into human-like forms, which appear vulnerable despite their sharp metallic edges. Part-human, part-machine, Paolozzi's *Standing Figure* shows both his interest in science fiction and new technologies, but also the existential threat to the human body during the Cold War.

Richard Hamilton (1922 - 2011)



Hers is a Lush Situation

1958

Oil, cellulose, metal foil and collage on panel

Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)

In this painting, Richard Hamilton explored the techniques of persuasion in car design and advertising, particularly the eroticised imagery of women's bodies and machines. The disembodied lips are collaged from a photograph of movie star Sophia Loren. Hamilton's use of relief reflects a new concept of space opened up by Cinemascope and 3D projection, in which the image was thrust from the screen to meet its audience.

Joe Tilson (b. 1928)

Letter from Che

1969



Screenprint on paper

Wilson Loan (2006)

In the late 1960s, Joe Tilson turned to the mass media as a source of inspiration for his work. In collaboration with Kelpra Studio, an influential printmaking workshop, Tilson made several screenprints with collage elements that drew on newspaper photography and referred to defining political events and iconic images of the decade, including the capture and death of Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara.

Colin Self (b. 1941)

Figure No.2 (Triptych)

1971



Aquatint on paper, three copper plates, printed in black
Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2004)

In the 1970s, Colin Self explored the idea of recording 'the absence of a thing – the negative space it has left behind.' For this print, Self worked with Isabel Rice, a life model at Norwich School of Art. Rice lay on a copper plate, and the area surrounding her body was sprayed with acid resist. The resulting image is the impression of the figure after exposure to the etching process, and the suggestion of a disintegrated body in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion.

Colin Self (b. 1941)

Waiting Women and Two Nuclear
Bombers (Handley Page Victors)
1962-63

Oil on board

Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)



Colin Self's paintings of the 1960s and early 1970s were preoccupied with the threat of nuclear war, and this group of figures can be seen as an expression of that anxiety. Dislocated from any explicable context, Self presents a central group of female figures and a lone male presence in the background. Their arrangement suggests a discordant fashion parade, above which are two low-flying nuclear bombers.

Richard Hamilton (1922 - 2011)

Swingeing London '67

1968

Relief, screenprint on oil on
photograph on hardboard

Wilson Gift through Art Fund (2006)



Swingeing London '67 reinterprets a Daily Mail photograph of Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger and the art dealer, Robert Fraser, being driven to Chichester Magistrates Court. They had been arrested on drugs charges at the home of fellow Rolling Stone, Keith Richards, at Redlands in West Sussex. Hamilton, who was also represented by Fraser, created this work to protest against the sensationalism of the tabloid media. He included a moulded frame and panel to simulate the police van windows.

Richard Hamilton (1922 - 2011)

Adonis in Y Fronts

1963

Wilson Loan (2006)



The title of this screenprint, the first that Richard Hamilton made, is a play on the pop song *Venus in Blue Jeans* by Jimmy Clanton, and the classical male 'ideal'. The imagery for *Adonis in Y Fronts* comes from

advertisements for Potenza chest expanders, found in an issue of the body-building magazine *Mr Universo*, and Y-cut briefs, which according to their advertising 'guaranteed an especially comfortable fit'. Through this work, Hamilton turns a satirical eye on the new hyper-masculine body.

