

**BURGH HOUSE**

Watercolours in an English country garden

Helen Allingham's name is synonymous with watercolours of quaint thatched cottages with people in simple rural dress posed in doorways or dallying in lush gardens. Popular with Victorian collectors though overly sentimental for some critics, these detailed paintings, many made in Surrey and Sussex in the 1880s, were to become valued as records of vanishing vernacular forms of architecture.

They are part of a prolific output of illustrations and paintings which enabled Allingham to live by her art, a rare situation for a woman in her time. She became the first fully elected female member of the Royal Watercolour Society in 1890. Burgh House in Hampstead has an extensive archive and collection of her work, bequeathed by her grandson Patric in 1989. Its new exhibition, *Beyond Watercolour Gardens: Helen Allingham Revisited*, re-examines her achievements, presenting her marriage, friends and the evolution of her career through photographs, artefacts and artworks.

There's an adventurous contemporary slant, with the

Burgh House exhibition shows work by Helen Allingham, famed painter and first woman fully elected to Royal Watercolour Society

juxtaposition of paintings and written observations by local artist Rea Stavropoulos. She developed the exhibition with Burgh House curator Rebecca Lodge who said, "Rea's enthusiasm for Allingham's life and work provided the impetus to reinterpret the collection in such an innovative way."

Born Helen Paterson in Derbyshire in 1848, her studies included attendance at the Royal Female School of Art and Slade School of Art where she made a lifelong friend - the children's illustrator and writer Kate Greenaway. Helen started working as an engraver in 1868 to support her studies and later became staff illustrator for *The Graphic*. Her artwork for this magazine



■ **Heather Cottage** by Helen Allingham.

impressed Vincent van Gogh, according to a letter written to his brother Theo in 1883.

Rea, who has taught watercolour painting at Burgh House for two years, aims to show what it means to be a professional female artist. "As a woman and an artist today, I can paint and celebrate nature through the naked female body in all its strength and grace," she says. Referring to the figure in such a work of her own, she says "Madre Terra is a gardener and nurturer: she has planted a seed and crouches protectively over it." Rea created an

Allingham inspired flower garden, "an outdoor canvas", on a Tuscan hillside.

Madre Terra is hung so that it is in the sightline of Allingham in a photographic portrait at her easel. Her painting chair, designed by artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti and marketed by William Morris & Co, stands between the ornately dressed Victorian artist and the naked gardener.

Rossetti was part of the circle of cultural figures, including historian Thomas Carlyle and poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, to which Helen was

introduced by her marriage to the Irish poet and editor William Allingham in 1874. They lived in Chelsea then Surrey, but Allingham is most associated with Hampstead because she lived from the late 1880s until her death in 1926 in Lyndhurst Road, at Eldon House, destroyed in the war. Rosslyn Hill Chapel has a plaque commemorating her life.

Until October 9, New End Square NW3. Wednesday to Friday & Sunday, noon to 5pm. Next Thursday at 12.30pm Rebecca Lodge will give a talk on the development of the exhibition.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE

24-year-old dealer exhibits Parisian artist

There can be few art-loving visitors to Paris who have not seen and surely been entranced by Niki de Saint Phalle's multi-coloured whimsical creatures for the Stravinsky Fountain at the Centre Pompidou. Also memorable is her monumental mosaic sculpture Buddha at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

It's not necessary to travel so far to see more of her exhilarating, playful work as Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art is staging a display of sculptures, reliefs, works on paper, jewellery and objects for the home in its first-floor Mayfair gallery. Aged 24, Omer, who grew up in Hampstead Garden Suburb and went to Highgate School, is Mayfair's youngest gallerist. He has been involved in dealing in art since university - he studied History of Art at Goldsmiths - and opened the gallery last year.



His father, Micky, has been a dealer in London for 20 years and many works in this exhibi-

tion, titled *Je Suis Une Vache Suisse*, come from the family collection. These include gouache preparatory studies that de Saint Phalle made for her major Noah's Ark project for the Jerusalem Biblical Zoo.

Born near Paris in 1906, de Saint Phalle moved with her family to America in 1933 and began making art seriously in 1953 as therapy following a nervous breakdown. She became well known in the early 1960s for the Shooting Paintings, created by firing at complex assemblages of canvas and containers of paint. Birds became a prevalent theme for sculptures and jewellery in the 1970s and feature in several pieces here, as do serpents as in *Snake Mirror* 1998 pictured here courtesy of Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art.

■ **Until September 9 at 21 Conduit Street W1, Monday to Friday 10am to**

MARILYN KERNOFF

Devon's land, sea and space

The ongoing meaning and direction in Marilyn Kernoff's life and art is provided by connecting with what she calls "true nature" as it manifests in each of us as well as in the observed natural world: "It is this deeper more essential dimension, as I sense and intuit it, especially in nature, that I strive to express in my paintings."

A selection of portraits and landscapes is currently on display at Joseph's Bookstore & Café Also in Temple Fortune.

"Qualities of stillness, peace, space and light are most resonant for me, especially in my landscapes," she says. Frequent experiences of South Devon and Welsh natural beauty inform the engaging semi-abstract landscapes. In her portraits she aims to provide "a window to the essential nature of the sitter". Oil paint is her medium of choice.



Kernoff was born in South Africa, moved to London in the 1970s and began painting some 15 years ago when working as a humanistic and transpersonal psychotherapist. After a serious illness in recent years, her career as an artist has become her predominant focus.

Until the end of September at 1-2 Ashbourne Parade, 1255-57 Finchley Road NW11 OAD. Prices range from £295 to £1,650.

PICTURE: Devon - Land, Sea and Space by Marilyn Kernoff.