



BRIEFING DOCUMENT

The Middlesbrough Collection at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA)



Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), which opened in 2007, is an internationally renowned contemporary art gallery and museum. MIMA exhibits, commissions and collects modern and contemporary art and craft from 1900 to the present day.

Programme

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art has a civic agenda to put art into action. We connect art, people and ideas. We work with communities to address current issues within politics, economics and culture. Our programmes encompass urgent themes such as climate change, migration, inequality, ageing and wellbeing.

We offer changing exhibitions, collection displays, learning activities, projects and community-focused initiatives that involve many artists and publics. These programmes promote creativity for everyone in ordinary life, through education, debate and making.

Part of Teesside University, we play a key role in the cultural life of the Tees Valley and wider North East. Our ambition is that a range of constituents shape who we are: a public site, open and accessible, diverse and inclusive and used by all.

MIMA has mounted numerous critically acclaimed exhibitions of drawing, painting, ceramics and sculpture, showing the work of many significant artists of the twentieth century and both internationally recognised and emerging contemporary artists. MIMA aims to generate new knowledge around modern and contemporary art, relating this to current local, national and international events and urgent themes and agendas. It is a key part of the social fabric of Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley and plays a leading role in the civic and cultural life of the region.

The Middlesbrough Collection

The Middlesbrough Collection consists of around 2,250 works of fine and applied art from around the mid-1800s to the present day. Its strengths are post-Second World War British painting, American contemporary drawing, twentieth-century British ceramics, European contemporary jewellery, and international contemporary installation.

The basis of the collection is work inherited from the Middlesbrough Art Gallery and the Cleveland Craft Centre, which both closed in 2003, and the Cleveland Gallery, which operated until 1999. Their holdings, previously distributed across these separate venues, were brought together with the launch of the museum in 2007.



Andrea Bowers, Political Slogans and Flower Magick: If you cut off my reproductive choice, can I cut off yours? (2008)



Ted Noten, Erenhot (2006)



Angus Suttie, Ceramic Form (1990)



Sonia Boyce, *She Ain't Holding Them Up, She's Holding On (Some English Rose)* (1986)



Edward Burra, *Sailors at a Bar* (c.1930)

Recent acquisitions have focused on identity politics and representation, with particular focus on the Black British Art movement, on redressing the gender imbalance in the collection and on internationalising the collection.

MIMA also collects socially engaged art and experimental making practices, often commissioning to collect. New acquisitions provide a springboard for community making activities, and provide a basis for temporary exhibitions and collection displays.



Recently acquired works by Chila Kumari Singh Burman on display in Tales of Valiant Queens, MIMA (Oct 2018 – Feb 2019)



The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1984) by Keith Piper, acquired 2017, on display in the Middlesbrough Collection Display 2018.



Iron Ore (1977) by Conrad Atkinson and Stone Free (2012) by Ângela Ferreira on display within Liquid Crystal Display, MIMA (Feb – Jun 2019)



Assemble, Granby Workshop products and prototypes, acquired 2017, on display at MIMA.



Creative Age constituents tiling the bathroom at MIMA with their tiles inspired by Assemble. Creative Age is a weekly workshop for those living with Dementia and their care-givers, friends and supporters.



Plates made by young people through the Middlesbrough Settlement 'How We Eat' project, 2018, on display at MIMA, 2019.

Current collection display

Why Are We Here? New Stories from the Middlesbrough Collection with Black Artists and Modernism

As part of our commitment to addressing the colonial structures that have shaped the institution, MIMA commissioned an audit of the Middlesbrough Collection by Black Artists & Modernism (BAM) researchers. Members of BAM: Artist Sonia Boyce, art historian Anjalie Dalal-Clayton and researcher Ashleigh Barice audited the collection for contributions by artists of African, Caribbean, Asian and Middle East and North Africa Region descent living or working in the UK from 1900 to 2016. Their findings joined BAM's national database which holds information on a number of significant British collections.

Black Artists & Modernism (BAM) is a research project based at University of the Arts London, in collaboration with Middlesex University. It asks how artists of African and Asian descent in Britain feature in the story of twentieth century art. BAM researchers address the understated connections and areas of contention between Black-British artists' practice and the work of art's relationship to Modernism. Following Kobena Mercer's essay "Iconography after Identity" (2005), researchers undertake close readings of artworks to counter a frequent deflection from the art object in favour of a focus on identity and ethnicity.



Close reading exercise with Black Artists & Modernism, MIMA, April 2019, with works by Magdalene Odundo and Fiona Salazar.

BAM's research supports MIMA to pay close attention aspects of the Middlesbrough Collection and to take careful, considered steps towards future acquisition and display. BAM's research underpins *Why Are We Here?*, an exhibition of the collection curated by MIMA, which highlights pieces from 1870 to 2019. The display makes visible some of the structures behind collections, sharing narratives around how works have been collected and why some art histories have been neglected. It asks, publicly, how the collection should be developed, used, interpreted and shown in the future. At the centre of the display is a self-portrait by the artist Sonia Boyce (then just 25 years old) *She Ain't Holding Them Up, She's Holding On (Some English Rose)* (1986). The Cleveland Gallery (a precursor to MIMA) acquired this significant work in 1987 and 32 years later, it is a cornerstone of what is now the Middlesbrough Collection.



Soursop, (1983) by Veronica Ryan, acquired 1983, and Toussaint L'Ouverture (1987) by Lubaina Himid, acquired 2017, on display in *Why Are We Here? New Stories from the Middlesbrough Collection with Black Artists and Modernism* (Mar 2019 – Mar 2020)



Working with constituents to curate Living Beyond Limits (Oct 2018 – Feb 2019), an exhibition that looked at the collection through a queer lens

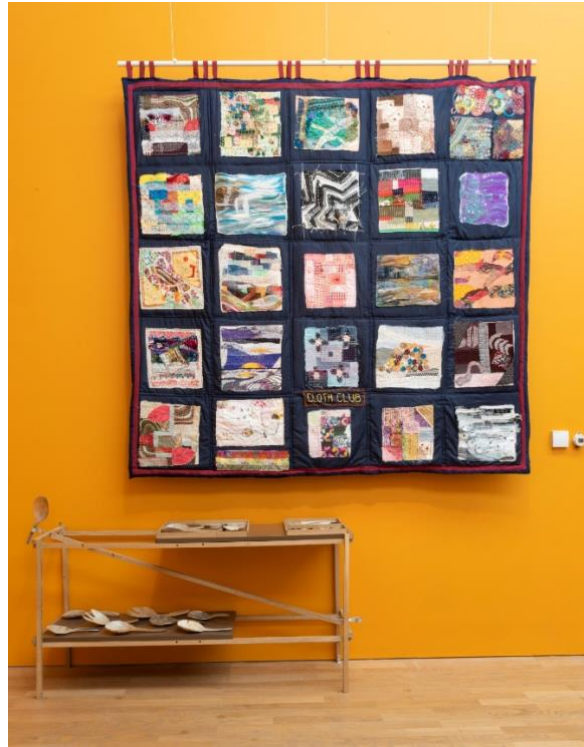




Teesside University students viewing the Middlesbrough Collection Display, 2017



Constituents lighting Sisters (2017) by Chiara Camoni, acquired 2018



The Middlesbrough Quilt, made by Cloth Club textile group who meet weekly at MIMA, on display at MIMA within Making, A Life (Oct 2018 – Feb 2019)





New Linthorpe, The Coffee House (2016), MIMA. Items made by constituents entered the Middlesbrough Collection.