

Royal Academy of Arts

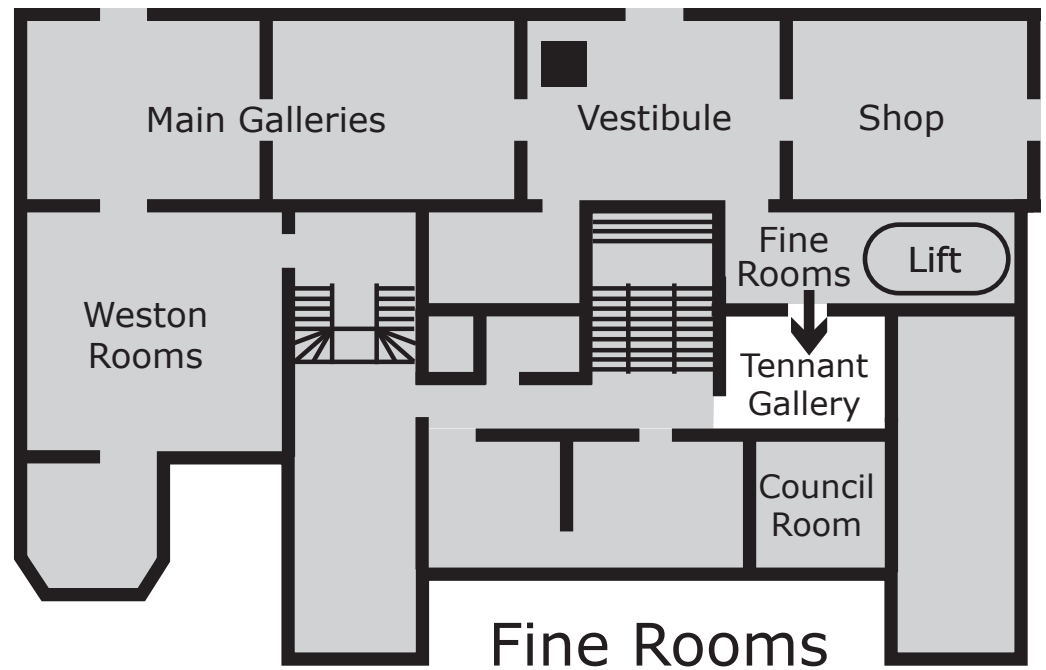
# Charles Stewart:

**Black and White Gothic**

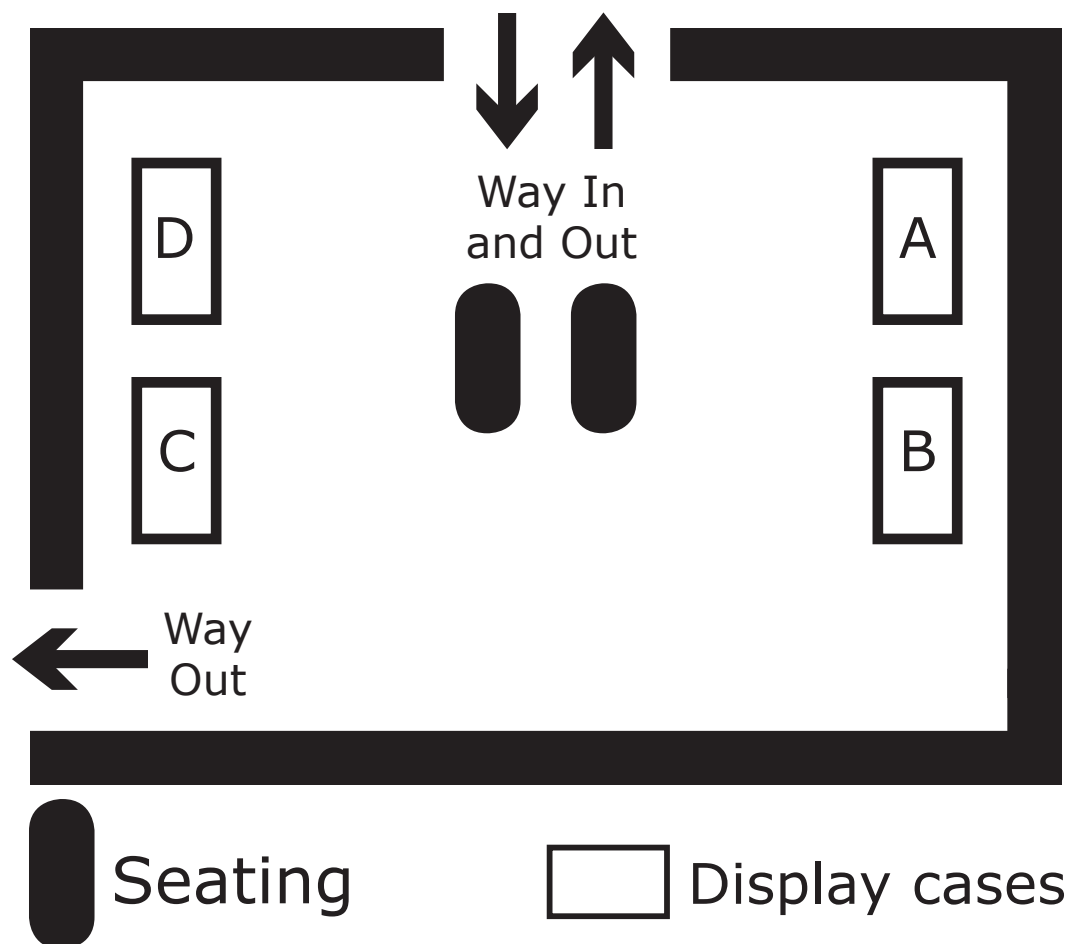
Tennant Gallery



**Do not remove from gallery**



You are in  
The Tennant Gallery



# **Charles Stewart: Black and White Gothic**

Tennant Gallery

20 December 2014 – 15 February 2015

## **Contents**

### **Page 3**

Introduction to this exhibition

### **Page 7**

Tennant Gallery: list of works in order of hang

### **Page 19**

Display cases

# Introduction

Illustrator Charles Stewart (1915-2001) was haunted by the Victorian novel 'Uncle Silas' (published 1864) for more than forty years.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's tale of Maud Ruthyn, a naïve heiress in peril, inspired Stewart to produce a set of 30 full page pen and ink drawings, in the manner of the great graphic artists of the nineteenth century, Phiz and Cruikshank.

The main action of the novel takes place within the confines of a decaying country house and its grounds. The damage is moral as well as physical, as hints of murder, immorality and the occult hover around the spectral Silas.

Stewart's first sketches for the project date from the early years of the Second World War. He was a conscientious objector and as an Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Warden and stretcher bearer he witnessed the monumental destruction of South London.

Stewart had studied art at the Byam Shaw School of Painting and Drawing and theatrical design at Government Schools (1932-1938); his sketch books highlight the influence of film and ballet on the development of his style.

He researched the architecture, costume and furniture of the Victorian period with a scholar's accuracy and an artist's individuality. He visited the set of the film of 'Uncle Silas' (1947) and made many drawings of the actors and their costumes, including of Jean Simmons, in an early role, as the heroine Maud.

This fascinating array of influences formed Stewart's personal vision of Silas, Maud and the house, Bartram-Haugh, influences we can identify from Stewart's archive, held in the Royal Academy Collections.

Film stills and theatre designs, proofs and publishing material from the abortive Bodley Head edition of 'Uncle Silas' (1948) are displayed alongside the decorative binding designs made for the Folio Society's edition in 1988.

Stewart designed and oversaw every aspect of the creation of the book in this artist's labour of love and obsession.

Unless otherwise stated, all works are by Charles Stewart and were presented to the RA Collections by the artist between 1989 and 2001.

## List of works (clockwise in order of hang)

**11**

### **Larch Tree, Shambellie**

Watercolour

c. 1953

Private collection

A view from Shambellie House, Stewart's family home, evokes the brooding landscape of "old, grey Galloway".

**1**

### **Preliminary drawings for full-page illustrations**

Pen and ink on wove paper

1940–1944

## **Top row**

Frontispiece

At the far end he nearly disappeared into the  
gloom

Madame uttered a slumbering moan, and  
turned more upon her face

She stood scowling into the room with a  
searching and pallid scrutiny

Madame was grimacing after me with a vile  
derisive distortion

She had gripped my arm very fiercely in her  
great bony hand

## **Bottom row**

A pink and white young lady... was flouncing  
up the last stair

She sat in a clumsy old armchair, with an  
ancient shawl about her, and her bare feet in  
a delft tub

Meanwhile, the winter deepened



Madame had seized my wrists, and a wild struggle was going on

She clasped me round the waist, and buried her face in my dress

## **2**

# **Three designs for bindings for the Folio Society edition of 'Uncle Silas', published 1988**

Pencil and gouache

1987–1988

# 3

## **Finished full-page illustrations for 'Uncle Silas'**

Pen and ink with white highlights on artist's board

**1946–1947**

These final versions of Stewart's illustrations were made after the end of the Second World War and were influenced by his visits to the set of Lawrence Irving's film production of 'Uncle Silas', made at Denham Studios over the winter of 1946–1947.

At the far end he nearly disappeared into the gloom

We walked in silence to the balustrade

I was interrupted by Captain Oakley's voice at the window

I stared in something like horror upon the large and rather hollow features

Madame was grimacing after me with a vile  
derisive distortion

Madame uttered a slumbering moan, and  
turned more upon her face

She stood scowling into the room with a  
searching and pallid scrutiny

She had gripped my arm very fiercely in her  
great bony hand

We were in no condition to be seen

## 4

# **Finished full-page illustrations for 'Uncle Silas'**

Pen and ink with white highlights on artist's board

1946–1947

This lean figure sheathed in shining black  
cloth, whose eyes glittered with a horrible sort  
of cunning

(continued over)

The florid tracery of the iron gate showing  
like the draperies of white robes

At the far end of a handsome wainscoted  
room... sat a singular-looking old man

A pink and white young lady... was flouncing  
up the last stair

The figure of Uncle Silas rose up... with a  
death-like scowl

I obtained admission to my uncle and relayed  
exactly what had passed

Madame had seized my wrists, and a wild  
struggle was going on

She clasped me round the waist, and buried  
her face in my dress

He stole, in a groping way... to the side of my  
bed

# 5

## **Finished full-page illustrations for 'Uncle Silas'**

Pen and ink with white highlights on artist's board  
1946–1947

Meanwhile, the winter deepened  
I lifted up my head and listened to the storm  
So together we went  
Milly was gesticulating to frighten some  
herons at the river's brink  
We left the house by the side entrance  
Looking with the absorbed gaze of an artist  
on the ruin

# 6

## **Finished illustrations for 'Uncle Silas'**

Pen and ink with white highlights on artist's board

1947

Frontispiece

Title Page

Final End Piece

# 7

## **Finished tailpieces for 'Uncle Silas'**

Pen and ink with white highlights on artist's board

1947

Ivy

Sword

Sunrise with dark clouds

Fern threatening small plant

## **'Uncle Silas' on Film**

While Charles Stewart was working on his illustrations he discovered that a film adaptation was being made of 'Uncle Silas'.

He contacted the production team as soon as he heard that filming was underway in 1946. A draft letter in his sketchbook stated his "very special admiration for the book and its author".

Lawrence Irving had given Stewart advice about film and theatre design during his studies at the Byam Shaw Art School and arranged for him to have access to the set.

Stewart visited Denham Studios at least ten times, made portrait sketches of the actors and collected a large number of production stills.

The expressionist style of the film's photography by Robert Krasker is reflected in some of Stewart's sketches.

Stewart was in the final stages of producing his illustrations for the Bodley Head edition of 'Uncle Silas' when he visited the set. The influence of the set and costume design can be seen by comparing the early illustrations and the finished versions.

## **8 Portrait sketches made at Denham Studios on the set of the film 'Uncle Silas'**

Pencil on blue grey wove paper

1947



Derrick de Marney in the role of Uncle Silas

Jean Simmons in the role of Caroline (Maud)  
Ruthyn

Manning Whiley in the role of Dudley Ruthyn

John Laurie in the role of Giles

Rica Fox by Charles Stewart

Katina Paxinou in the role of Madame de la  
Rougierre

## 9

# Uncle Silas

A Two Cities Film, 1947

Director: Charles Frank

Producer: Lawrence Irving

Photography: Robert Krasker

By courtesy of ITN Source

# 10

## **Rosie, Wearing Day-dress, c. 1873**

Watercolour

June 1970

Private collection

Stewart's obsessive research extended to the dress of the period: he began to collect Victorian clothes to further inform the accuracy of the costume he was drawing. Later Stewart also acquired mannequins, or lay-figures, to display his growing collection of historic costumes.

He described his favourite, Rosie, as having a "benevolent but commanding presence". This made her a perfect stand-in for The Queen when the painter Annigoni borrowed her to model the Garter Robes for his famous portrait, painted for the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers in 1954.

# Case A

Material from Charles Stewart's studio, including self-portrait drawing and sketches of colleagues from Battersea ARP depot, c. 1940; contents of his desk; ballet shoes; illustration of 'Petrushka' from 'Come to the Ballet' by Pigeon Crowle (published 1957).

Private collection

# Case B

Stewart made many preparatory drawings and sketches for 'Uncle Silas' during quiet times at the Battersea ARP Depot.

His depiction of Silas, Maud and Bartram-Haugh took shape from 1940 onwards. Silas' evil accomplice, the governess Madame de la Rougierre, is depicted with particular relish.

This case contains a selection of preliminary and intermediate drawings made between 1940 and 1945.

# Case C

## Finished head- and tail-pieces

Pen and ink on wove paper with white highlights  
1947 and 1987

Most of these highly finished studies were made for the Folio Society edition of 'Uncle Silas' in 1987. Some were adapted from sketches made for the unpublished Bodley Head edition in 1947 ('Storm Clouds' and 'Spider with Flies Trapped in Web') and one was drawn in 1947 ('Owl with Prey').

Ruined Stone Archway, 1987

Obelisk in Ruined Graveyard, 1987

Storm Clouds, 1987

Man Trap, 1987

Owl with Prey, 1947

Top Hat, Gloves and Cane, 1987

Bird Skulls and Spiked Shell, 1987

Spider with Flies Trapped in Web, 1987

Gnarled Trees with Ivy, 1987

# Case D

Unknown photographer, six  
publicity stills for the film  
'Uncle Silas', 1947

## **Portrait sketches made on the set of 'Uncle Silas'**

Pencil on wove paper

1946–1947

Derrick de Marney in the role of Uncle Silas

Katina Paxinou's stand-in, in the role of  
Madame de la Rougierre

Katina Paxinou in the role of Madame de la  
Rougierre

Two sketches of Katina Paxinou in the role of  
Madame de la Rougierre

# Your feedback, please

As we are committed to access for all, we would like your feedback on our large-print provision. Feedback forms are available from the Information Desk on the ground floor.

We also offer one-to-one audio descriptive tours of the exhibitions with trained volunteer audio describers.

Wheelchair users can also benefit from our volunteers, who can assist with taking you around the galleries so you can enjoy our exhibitions at your leisure. With prior notice we can arrange these at a time that fits in with your schedule. Contact me for further information.

Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Officer



**InTouch**  **at the RA**

Design & typography by WfS Create: [mail@wfscreate.com](mailto:mail@wfscreate.com)  
© Copyright Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2014.