

Royal Academy of Arts

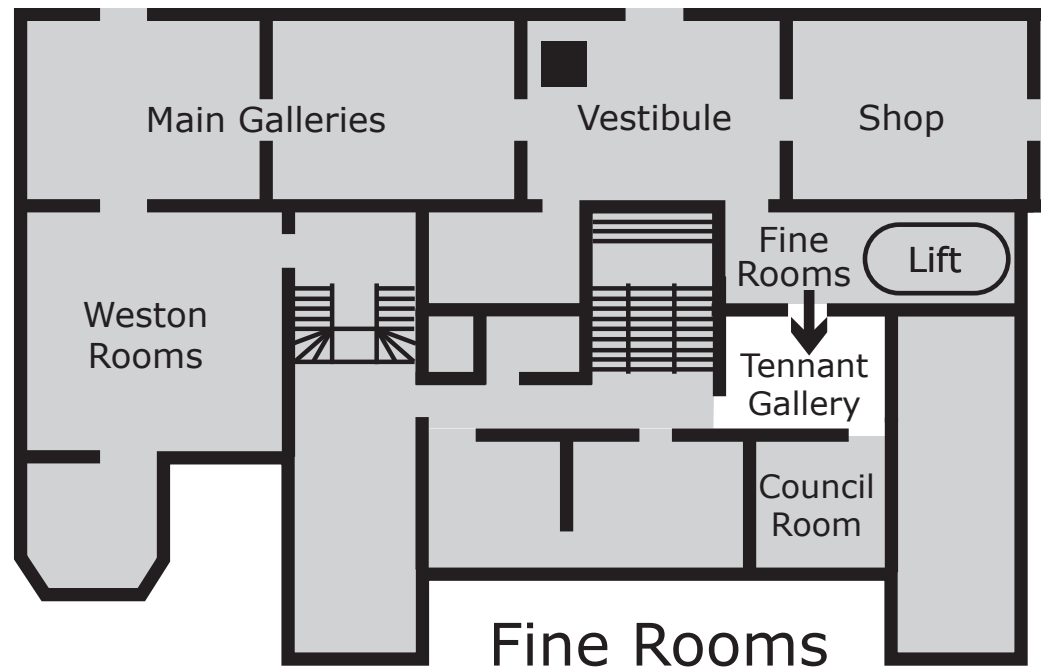
An Abiding Standard:

The Prints of Stanley Anderson RA

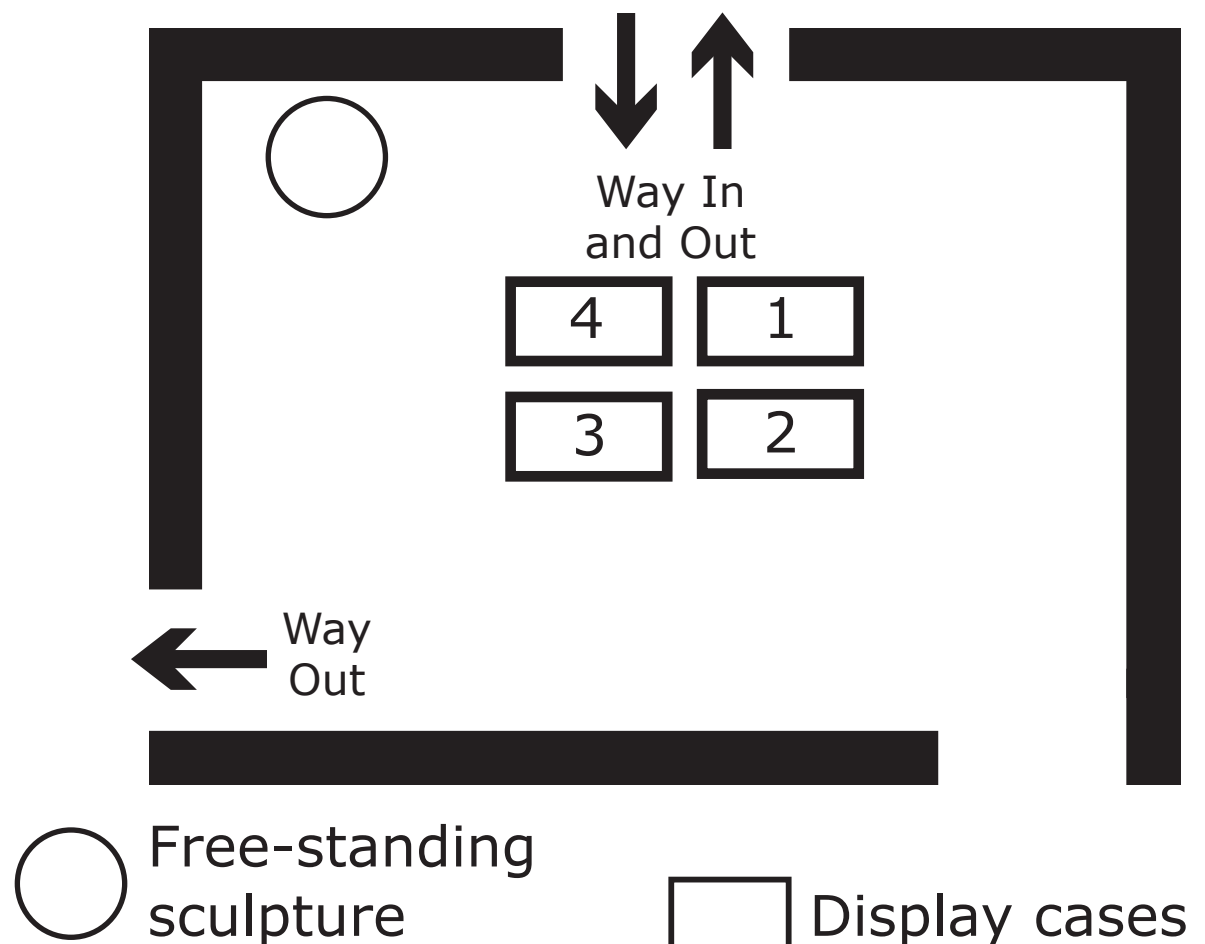
Tennant Gallery



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The Tennant Gallery



An Abiding Standard: The Prints of Stanley Anderson RA

Tennant Gallery and Richard Sharp
Council Room

25 February – 24 May 2015

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An Abiding Standard:

The Prints of Stanley Anderson RA

The subjects of Stanley Anderson's prints evoke a sense of nostalgia.

Craftsmen and farm workers carrying out manual tasks that are now performed by machinery. Rural scenes that have turned into sprawling suburbia. Sights of London that have been demolished or that were destroyed during the Blitz.

And yet, Anderson was very much concerned with the present.

Instead of retreating into the past, he responded to the socio-economic changes he observed as, within a mere quarter century, the British Empire of his youth was transformed into a nation scarred by two world wars.

Today, Anderson's reputation rests mainly on his line engravings on the theme of rural crafts and farm labour, a body of work that earned him a CBE in 1951. By considering these engravings alongside his lesser known etchings and drypoints, we can more fully appreciate Anderson's project and philosophy.

Sceptical of scientific progress and modish conformity in art, Anderson commented on an age he regarded as emotionally detached and devoid of spirituality.

Anderson's subjects are rarely wistful.

There is wit and determination in his performances. Indeed, Anderson rewards a close engagement with his painstakingly wrought prints by demonstrating that every line or mark serves a purpose.

“I’m a staunch traditionalist”, he once exclaimed. “It is healthy, robust and engenders a respect for abiding values.”

Unless otherwise stated all works are on loan from private collections. ‘RA’ denotes Royal Academy collection.

Early works

2

Head Study

1908

1

Clare Street, Bristol No. 1

1907

5

Clerkenwell Shops

1910

4

Under London Bridge

1909

3

**An Old Market Passage,
Eastcheap**

1909

6

**Ship Tavern Passage,
London**

1911

7

**To Our Glorious Dead
(The Cenotaph)**

1919

Eager to take up what he called the “job of art”, Anderson plotted to leave Bristol, where he was apprenticed as a trade engraver in his father’s workshop.

He enrolled in evening classes in etching and began documenting Bristol street scenes and landmarks.

The etching 'Head Study' (1908) earned Anderson a small scholarship, which enabled him to move to London. In January 1909, he commenced his studies at the Royal College of Art, where he was instructed in etching and drypoint by Sir Frank Short.

Visiting galleries and print rooms, Anderson took inspiration from the Old Masters, especially Dürer. Anderson's early London etchings also betray the influence of James McNeill Whistler.

As a student, Anderson was encouraged to explore London in search of subjects: sites along or close to the Strand, the Thames wharves, and markets such as Leadenhall, as depicted in 'Old Market Passage, Eastcheap' (1909) and 'Ship Tavern Passage, London' (1911).

London Sites

8

Smithfield Market

1911

13

**Bush House from the
Strand**

1923

12

Cox's New Site, Pall Mall

1922

11

Gracechurch Street, E.C.3

1921

14

Piccadilly Circus

1923

15

**A Mayfair Backwater; or,
Crabb's Opponent**

1930

16

St Paul's, Covent Garden

1922

10

**Fruit Porters, Lower
Thames Street**

1912

9

Billingsgate

1911

17

Covent Garden Market

1924

After Anderson moved to London in 1909, the city and the daily activities of its people became his main subjects. In the 1920s, figures were increasingly prominent in his prints.

Yet even his London views are seldom strictly architectural. They are rich in cultural references and sly observations.

Anderson was drawn to dramatic contrasts expressive of rapidly changing times. Many of Anderson's London street scenes show present-day activities against the backdrop of historic architecture.

The clash of old and new is captured in confrontations of horse-drawn vehicles and motorcars. In 'Cox's New Site, Pall Mall' (1922) and 'Bush House from the Strand' (1923), the London Anderson knew as a student is demonstrated to be vanishing.

'Piccadilly Circus' (1923) expresses Anderson's unease about so-called progress by referencing 'R. U. R.', a play that introduced the word "robot" into our dictionary.

In Anderson's prints, the devil of modernity is in the detail.

London Scenes

20

Wreckage

1922

25

**The Madonna of the
Arches**

1925

24

**Scandal Bearers
(Caledonian Market)**

1924

18

**Casual Labour,
Billingsgate**

1913

21

By-Products

1922

23

Venus and Adonis

1924

28

The National Gallery

1925

26

**At Sotheby's Auction
Room**

early 1920s

tempera

27

The Chess Players

1925

31

Gleaners

1932

32

Pan in Fulham

1932

30

In Check

1931

29

The Reading Room

1930

33

“What a Piece of Work is Man!”; or, What is Art?

1936

Anderson's figure subjects of the 1920s and 1930s are generally distinguished by their empathy for the disenfranchised: the clochard, the menial labourer, the aged and vulnerable.

In 'By-Products' (1922), two vagrants luxuriate in the sunshine on the Thames Embankment while work is going on around them.

Carved into the bench they have temporarily claimed for themselves are the artist's own initials, as well as two overlapping hearts pierced by an arrow: L loves S. The fortunes of the artist and his wife Lilian, Anderson suggests, were not far removed from those of his subjects.

However, Anderson drew the line at romanticising ignorance, a lack of cultural education that, in 'The National Gallery' (1925), is portrayed as a wilful disregard for the arts.

The visitors occupying the benches of the gallery have not come to be stimulated or enlightened. They have simply come for shelter.

Continental Travel

34

Chartres Cathedral

1911

35

Paris Tenements

1915

40

**Le Café des Papes,
Avignon**

1928

36

Tortoni's, Le Havre

1925

41

The Fallen Star

1929

46

Between Tides, Dieppe

1931

(RA)

45

Morning on the Seine

1930

43

St Nicholas, Prague

1929

(RA)

42

**Within the Ramparts,
St Malo**

1929

(RA)

38

Le Marché, Falaise

1926

44

Dürer's House, Nürnberg

1930

(RA)

39

The Goose Fair, Albi

1927

Anderson is most closely associated with English subjects.

However, in the 1910s and 1920s, he made several visits to the Continent. Anderson responded to the growing demand for prints by supplying the views that were likely to sell. At the same time, he continued to assert his personal vision.

'Paris Tenements' (1915), etched from drawings made during a trip to France that was cut short by the outbreak of the First World War, suggests how eager Anderson was to steer away from the traditional metropolitan views expected of artists.

The sites that caught Anderson's eye in France, Spain or Czechoslovakia were the ones that attracted him in London: everyday life on the streets, the bustle of outdoor markets and work along the river.

Anderson's figure subjects are not imaginary. Prints like 'The Fallen Star' (1929) feature people and capture moments that Anderson observed on his walks.

'In focus'

15

A Mayfair Backwater; or, Crabb's Opponent

1930

During the interwar years, the bohemian atmosphere of Shepherd Market in the London district of Mayfair proved irresistible to emerging artists and writers. Its allure grew with the publication of Michael Arlen's sensational bestseller 'The Green Hat' (1924), for which it served as a setting.

Anderson, too, is setting a scene here. Creating a play of shadow and light, he draws viewers into an unfolding melodrama of urban life.

Anderson recalled that while making a preparatory drawing, a man who had “imbibed well” told him that the derelict building had once been “occupied by Nelson and his lady-love”. Now awaiting demolition by the firm of Crabb, the house could not be torn down since its only remaining resident refused to budge.

Anderson captured the ongoing battle of wits by placing ‘Crabb’s opponent’ in the lighted doorway, his fate foreshadowed on the wall.

As the dark mood suggests, what drew Anderson’s attention to this address was a sense that London’s urban landscape was under threat, that nothing he knew or cared about was ever safe as houses.

33

“What a Piece of Work is Man!”; or, What is Art?

1936

In front of the newspaper stands at Hammersmith Public Library, two men deliberate on a question pondered by Hamlet: how man, “noble in reason” and “infinite in faculty”, could be debased to such an extent that he “appears no other thing ... than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours”.

Through fictional newspaper headlines like “Civilisation!”, Anderson voices his critique of modernity. Below it are images of warfare, of a bishop blessing the troops and men kneeling in worship of the machine.

Perversely juxtaposed to this are an advertisement for slimming aids and an article on “Hollywood Divorce”.

The magazine editorial 'Art Today' by Blurbert Wede mocks the critic Sir Herbert Read. A child's stick-figure drawing slams 'Art Now', Read's 1933 book on the role of art in education.

"Anyone can now make his or her own standard without fear", Anderson protested. "The very word 'art', now, has no status for if the mass of child-art is 'art', then, in God's name, what are the National Gallery pictures?"

82

Making the Gate

Anderson became involved in the lives of his "craftsmen" sitters. In the case of this engraving, the relationship between artist and subject went well beyond empathy.

During the war, the income of Timms, an Oxfordshire farrier, had derived chiefly from supplying horseshoes to the military. When adjustment to civilian life proved difficult, Anderson encouraged the smith to diversify.

Working to a design supplied by Anderson, Timms and his son won the first post-war Royal Show competition for blacksmiths. In his engraving, Anderson displays his winning design (top right) and shows Timms at work on the gate.

An increase in riding and horse shows during the 1950s would allow Timms to return to his original trade.

Anticipating this, Anderson places a boy from his village at the smithy door to suggest its survival. The lines from 'Tubal Cain' by Charles MacKay (1814–1889) echo Timms's newfound pride in his work.

Like the blacksmith in MacKay's interpretation of the biblical figure, Timms transitioned successfully from war work to peacetime trade.

Display cases

Case 1

84

**Anderson's Etching and
Engraving Tools**

85

**Bookplate for Andrew
Rugg-Gunn**

1938

86

**Bookplate for Shakespear
Lodge**

1943

87

Bookplate for Professor Alvin Rolfs

1945

Between 1938 and 1945, Anderson engraved six bookplates. For their designs and lettering, he drew on skills and techniques he had learned as an apprentice heraldic engraver in his father's workshop.

Anderson's first recorded bookplate was commissioned by Andrew Rugg-Gunn, an ophthalmologist who pioneered the contact lens. As reflected in the motif, Rugg-Gunn was an enthusiast of Scandinavian culture.

Anderson's engraving for the Shakespear Lodge of Freemasons features an intricate design of Masonic symbols: a square and compass, the eight-pointed star of Jehovah, and a Bible opened at an account of the building of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, to which the Freemasons trace their roots.

The bookplate for Alvin Rolfs was engraved as a token of Anderson's friendship with the American academic who was stationed in England during the Second World War.

The iconography reflects Rolfs's love of literature and his appreciation of traditional craftsmanship. Rolfs's likeness on the stone capital is flanked by portraits of the artist and his wife.

Case 2

88

Rest and Refreshment

exhib. RA 1948

Watercolour

89

The Village Green

undated

Watercolour

In 1953, worsening neuritis put an end to Anderson's engraving career. Thereafter, he worked in watercolours.

These paintings are informed by his study of the techniques of nineteenth-century British artists: Frederick Walker's semi-fresco manner, J. M. W. Turner's use of toned paper and "water mixed with white almost to a creamy consistency", and William Hunt's hatching of colour on a bright, "china-like" ground.

This change of medium and other impositions of old age are reflected in his subject matter.

Anderson's watercolour paintings were less focused on the work of the farmers or labourers that he could no longer observe closely. Instead, they are concerned with weather conditions and seasonal cycles.

Anderson's watercolours were much sought after at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions. As the Academy Secretary observed, among the "annual stampede" of purchasers was "at least one collector wearing plimsolls in order to secure first choice, and regularly all six watercolours were sold within less than a minute".

Case 3

91

The Biometrician

1919

Etching

Anderson's "pet aversion" was the attempt of scientists to "make a square peg fit a round hole". In this darkly comic performance, the metaphor is rendered concrete.

The Great War had called the very foundations of civilisation into question. Regaining a sense of control by applying statistical methods to global humanitarian crises struck Anderson as desperate and misguided.

With this etching, he sought to express the idea of a scientist “vainly struggling to measure up humanity and endeavouring to fit mankind into a rigidly rational scheme of things, to make folk conform to an exact science....”

The faun was intended to represent the “Life-Force waiting to upset all the scientists’ theories and calculations”. Nature, Anderson believed, would have the last laugh.

92

‘Old Father Time’, of Wiltshire

1944

Engraving
(RA)

Anderson identified the subject as “that dear old fellow” in ‘A Shepherd’s Life’ (1910), a narrative account of life in the South Wiltshire Downs by the naturalist William Henry Hudson.

Anderson’s engraving is based on Hudson’s description of a “wonderful old man” who refused to “sleep at home, even if it was close by, but would lie down on the grass at the side of the field and start working ... quite three hours before the world woke up to its daily toil.”

The image of a man fiercely clinging to a purposeful life no doubt served as an inspiration to Anderson, then in his sixtieth year and faced with the prospect of having his life’s work as a printmaker cut short by worsening bouts of neuritis in his right hand and arm.

Case 4

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**Anderson's Workshop
Ledger**

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**Anderson's Record of
Exhibitions and Sales**

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**Anderson's Medals and
Awards**

Anderson's Workshop Ledger

This ledger records most of the prints that Anderson made between June 1927 and May 1953. It attests to the artist's commitment to his work and his efforts to preserve his legacy.

Anderson's notes identify titles, edition sizes, publishers and prices, dates when impressions were taken, as well as the number of states and trial proofs, along with descriptions of changes made between each of the states.

Anderson also identified purchasers, the recipients of his gifts, and the movement of prints to and from galleries.

Anderson's Record of Exhibitions and Sales

Anderson exhibited widely in Britain, on the Continent, in the United States of America and in Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This handwritten volume documents art works that Anderson sent to exhibitions and records his transactions with dealers, galleries and collectors.

The book documents Anderson's many contributions to British Council exhibitions. It records prints that toured and sold as far afield as Ankara, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Stockholm, Tangier, Venice and Warsaw as well as China, Russia and the West Indies.

Anderson's Medals

Anderson regularly contributed to annual exhibitions of the Chicago Society of Etchers and the California Society of Etchers in Los Angeles, where his prints met with critical acclaim.

Among the medals displayed here are those awarded in California and Chicago between 1929 and 1934. These are shown alongside the Commander of the British Empire medal that was awarded to Anderson in 1951 "for services to the art of engraving".

Sculpture

Charles Web Gilbert (1867–1925)

Stanley Anderson

1916

Plaster

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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Officer



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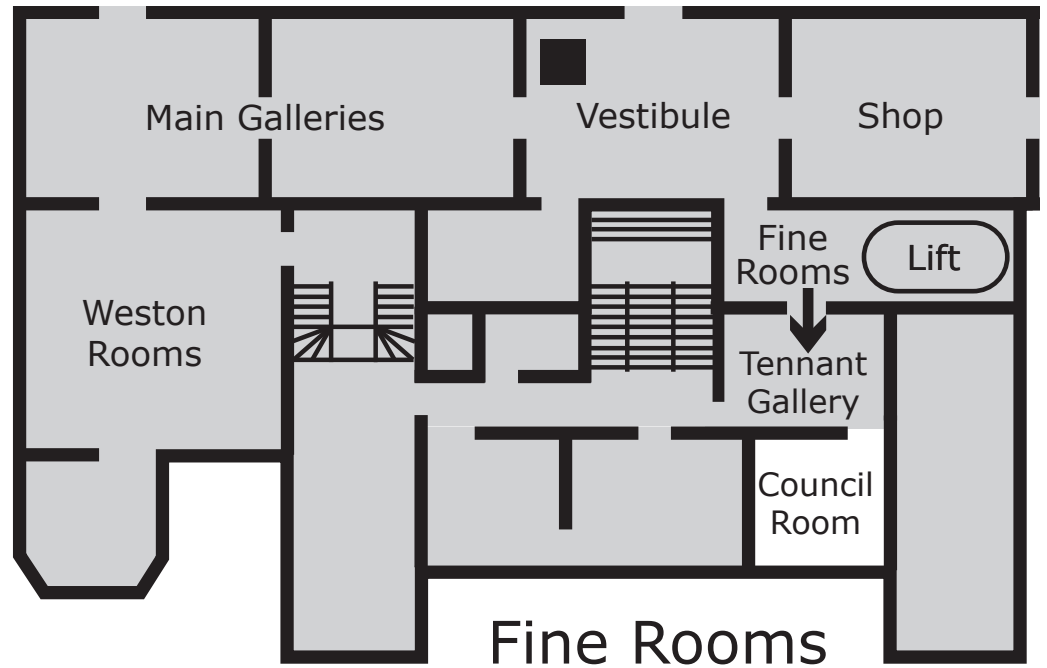
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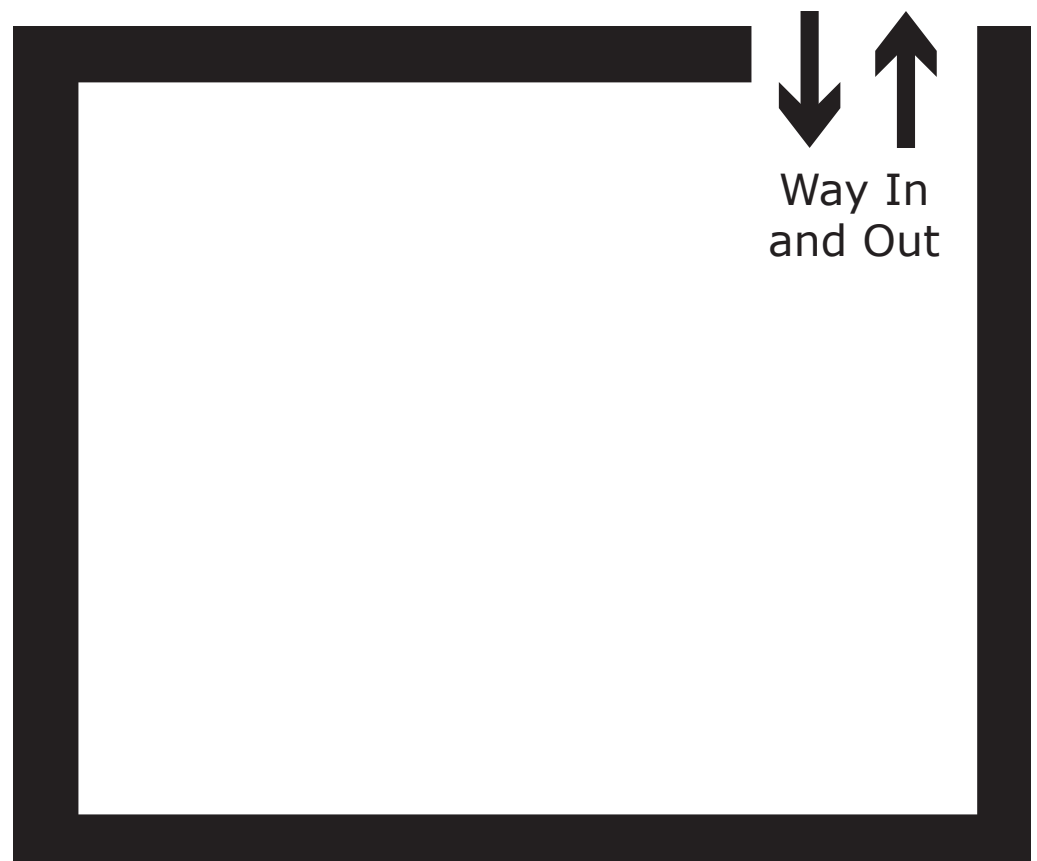
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An Abiding Standard: The Prints of Stanley Anderson RA

Tennant Gallery and Richard Sharp
Council Room

25 February – 24 May 2015

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Richard Sharp Council Room: list of works in
order of hang

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Stanley Anderson (1884–1966)

Against his wishes, fifteen-year-old Stanley Anderson entered upon a seven-year apprenticeship at his father's workshop in Bristol.

The business specialised in the engraving of ornamental and heraldic designs on household silverware. Receiving little encouragement at home, young Stanley yearned for a career in art.

He learned from books, practiced figure drawing in front of the mirror and enrolled in etching classes. In 1908, he was awarded a British Institution Scholarship that allowed him to study printmaking at the Royal College of Art in London.

In 1912, Anderson was taken up by New Bond Street dealer-publisher Colnaghi's and soon established his reputation as a printmaker.

After working in a munitions factory during the First World War, Anderson taught in London art schools. At Goldsmiths' College, his students included Graham Sutherland, Paul Drury and Robin Tanner. Anderson was elected ARA in 1934 and RA in 1941.

During a career that spanned over half a century, Anderson contributed regularly to the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts and the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers.

In all his endeavours, he enjoyed the support of his wife, Lilian, with whom he raised two sons.

In 1941, after the bombing of his London home and studio, Anderson and his wife moved permanently to Oxfordshire.

There, he enjoyed the fellowship of farmers and craftsmen. Regarding them as his equals, he devoted the remainder of his printmaking career to commemorating their work.

This exhibition of Anderson's prints coincides with the publication of 'Stanley Anderson RA. Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné'.

What emerges in this comprehensive record of Anderson's career is the personal philosophy of the artist.

Farm, Field and Country Crafts

59

The Farm Hand

1933

60

The Hedger

1934

61

Sheep Dipping

1935

62

Brook Farming

1936

63

Windswept Corn

1938

64

Willow Lopping

1939

65

Clamping Spuds

1942

66

Trimming and Faggoting

1943

(RA)

67

Tree Fellers

1945

(RA)

76

The Thatcher

1944

(RA)

68

The Keeper

mid-1940s

drawing

Itinerants

54

The Old Tinker

1933

55

The Blind Musician

1938

58

The Clothes Peg Maker

1953

57

The Wayfarer

1941

56

The Stone Breaker

1940

Anderson was intrigued by the figure of the wanderer. He loathed snobbery and elitism. Works like 'The Old Tinker' (1933) commemorate alternative yet traditional ways of living.

In 'The Wayfarer' (1941), there is no indication of the war being fought by a younger generation. Modernity is confined to an unheeded sign above the men's heads: "Cinema Dope for Machine Slaves".

Here as elsewhere, Anderson comments on the bane of mass production and mass-marketed escapism that, to him, was alienating and soulless.

In many of Anderson's engravings, nostalgia seems paramount. The artist's biting commentaries on life – which often take the form of signs, fictional newspaper headlines, and literary allusions – are rather more difficult to discern.

In 'Stone Breaker' (1940), a newspaper spread like a blanket on the ground carries the headlines "Power, Politics and Sentimentality Breed Greed and National Idolatry Hence War" and "Christ's Way – The Way to Peace".

A Visual Manifesto

83

False Gods

1949

(RA)

With 'False Gods' (1949) Anderson came closest to a pictorial expression of his worldview. Anderson's "general idea" was a critique of the "heartless, doctrinaire, materialistic ideology" that, he argued, resulted from the destruction of the "spiritual values underlying men's thought and activity".

The "symbols of traditional Christian culture" – dove, Bible and mitre – are shown in flames, along with a knight typifying "tolerance, charity and dignity".

Three heads represent "Family", the "basic unit of a sane society" that was "being gradually 'liquidated' through the State". Rising from the flames is the "evil bird of bogus Democracy".

Anderson rejected the cliché that it is impossible to put back the clock. He saw ample proof of "how frequently mankind puts the clock back" to "barbarism in ethics, childish perversity in the arts and baser ambitions in living."

Throughout his career, Anderson defended the importance of an "abiding standard" in all aspects of daily life and work.

Farm, Field and Country Crafts (continued)

69

Timms' Smithy, Thame

1934

70

Purbeck Quarrymen

1936

71

Hurdle Makers

1937

72

The Wheelwright

1939

(RA)

73

The Lace Maker; or, "The fruitful ground, the quiet mind"

1940

74

The Basket Maker

1942

(RA)

75

The Chair Maker

1944

77

Chiltern Wood Turners

1945

78

The Saddler

1946

79

The Cooper

1947

80

The Violin Maker

1948

(RA)

81

The Rake Makers

1948

82

Making the Gate

1949

(RA)

Anderson did not like to refer to himself as an artist. He aligned himself with the workers and craftsmen who, from the early 1930s onwards, became his most prominent subjects.

He had a profound respect for artisanship and manual labour alike, as is apparent in the detail with which he documented the handiwork of farm hand and violinmaker.

The inception of the “craftsmen” series coincides with Anderson’s move to the country.

“Happiness then came to the peak,” he recalled, “and my mind and feelings became clearer, more definite in their reactions.”

In the countryside, alive to the seasons, he “seemed immersed in a sense of stability which was not static – a sort of ordered growth”.

Like Samuel Palmer and the Ancients, Anderson championed the rural worker.

He believed that although the Industrial Revolution had “in some ways increased material comforts, an asinine craving for speed and noise and the barren excitements of commercialised amusements,” it had “almost completely demoralised spiritual values”.

Portraits

47

Portrait of the Artist

1910

(RA)

48

Head Study (Portrait of the Artist)

1913

52

The Sister

1931

53

Self Portrait

1933

50

Ivan

1935

oil

51

**Lilian, squared drawing
for 'The Sister'**

1930

49

Maxim

1922

tempera

During the 1920s, Anderson carried out a number of portrait commissions. In a wider sense of the word, portraiture remained important throughout his career. Most of the figures in his prints were based on studies of himself or depicted people he knew.

Anderson has been described as shy and reticent. In 'Self Portrait' (1933), though, his confidence is apparent. He had just enjoyed a retrospective exhibition of his prints, drawings and paintings.

A year later, he would be elected Associate of the Royal Academy of Arts.

'The Sister' (1931) is a portrait of Anderson's wife Lilian, a trained nurse. When the couple's children – Ivan and Maxim – were grown up, she returned to nursing to augment her husband's income.

Anderson modelled this engraving on Holbein's portraits to convey the dignity of his subject. The sitter's identity is not stated. Instead, it is hinted at in the emblematic lily that is incorporated into a heraldic design.

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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Officer



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