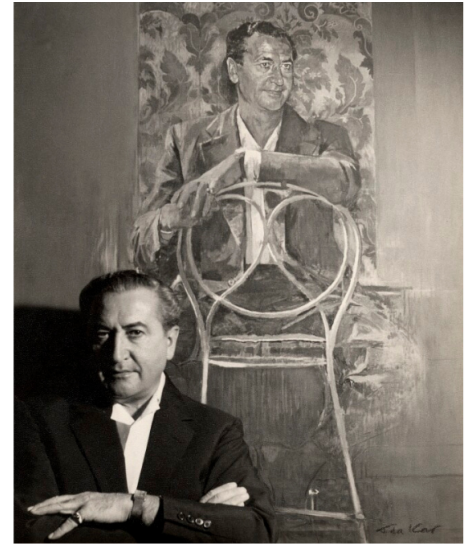


## The Hanover Gallery and Queer Representation



L - Erica Brausen, shot by J.S. Lewinski, March 1968



R – Arthur Jeffress, shot by Ida Kar, 1959

Founded in 1947 by Erica Brausen and Arthur Jeffress, the Hanover Gallery is now best remembered for its role as Francis Bacon's first gallery. The work produced by Bacon in the decade he spent with the Hanover was amongst his most challenging material: stylistically revolutionary and overtly homoerotic. Bacon is quoted as saying that Brausen was less than supportive of the overt homoeroticism in his work, asking him "Vy do you have to paint these filthy pictures that it's impossible to sell?"<sup>1</sup> In this paper I will argue that a closer examination of the Hanover Gallery's exhibiting program raises questions about the implied sentiment in Bacon's anecdote. I will use theoretic and iconographic visual analysis to prove that Bacon was far from an exception in the Hanover's programming, but rather was one of a group of queer artists whom the Hanover exhibited and one of several producing homoerotic imagery. This paper will argue that, particularly in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Hanover was a supportive platform for queer artists, and a rare forum for gallery visitors to see artwork that participated in homoerotic discourse.

Brausen and Jeffress ran the Hanover in tandem until 1953, when Jeffress decided to leave in order to start his own venture.<sup>2</sup> Both gallerists were queer and in same-sex relationships. Throughout their partnership, and well into the decade following, British law was hostile to people with queer

identities. The years after World War II saw historically high rates of criminal prosecution for homosexual acts between men, with partial decriminalisation coming into law in 1967.<sup>3</sup> Female homosexuality was never recognised in British law, but many queer and lesbian women experienced social isolation and discrimination as a result of their sexual orientation.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I follow Richard Meyer in using the term 'queer' in reference to people whose "sexual and cultural practices [...] defy the norm."<sup>5</sup> Many of the people discussed would not have defined themselves as homosexual. Rather than impose an anachronistic definition on their sexuality, this paper will use queer as an umbrella term to encompass 'the other'.<sup>6</sup> I have not presumed that homoerotic imagery is solely produced by queer artists and have followed the OED in defining and identifying homoeroticism as something which '[pertain] to or [is] characterised by a tendency for erotic emotions to be centred on a person of the same sex'. I have been guided by Griffey and Reay's groundbreaking analysis of homoeroticism in the work of Edward Melcarth, informed by the artist's discussions with sex theorist Alfred Kinsey.

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L – Michael Ayrton, *The House, Ischia*, 1947

C – Eduard Bargheer, *Südliche Häusergruppe*, 1960

R – Sigmund Pollitzer, *House by a Beach*, 1935

Upon opening in 1948, the Hanover staged a series of exhibitions by queer artists working in Southern Italy and the Italian islands, whose work focussed on eroticised male subjects. As studied by Ponzio, the prostitution of young Italian boys and men was a 'pervasive and ordinary practice' from the mid-1940s, with associated pederasty tolerated by local communities.<sup>7</sup> For the Hanover



artists, several of whom had faced persecution for their sexual practices, this permissive environment was a safe haven and one which provided ample subject matter for their work.



Fig. 1– Michael Ayrton, *Mending Nets, Ischia*, c.1947



Fig. 2 – Michael Ayrton, *Portrait of Norman Douglas*, 1948



Fig. 3 – Michael Ayrton, *Elysian Self-Portrait (Midday)*, 1949

The first such exhibition was Michael Ayrton's 1948 debut, 'Italian Studies'. Ayrton's work participated in a visual rhetoric that framed the male body in homoerotic ways.<sup>8</sup> *Mending Nets, Ischia* (c. 1947) and two other exhibited works take as their subject the figures of fishermen (fig. 1). I posit that the figure of the fisherman in the work of Ayrton and his peers may be considered analogous to the figure of the sailor in contemporary art history more broadly: a hypermasculine figure who 'cross[es] sexual boundaries'.<sup>9</sup> I also posit that the fisherman, like the sailor, may be an allusion to 'trade', described by Griffey and Reay as "ostensibly straight, usually working-class men who might engage in homosexual sex."<sup>10</sup> Considering Ponzio's study on the availability of homosexual prostitution from straight working class men in Italy at the time, I would argue it likely that the coastal communities depicted in the work of Ayrton and his peers may have been sites where local men, primarily fishermen, may have engaged in homosexual activity for financial compensation. Certainly, in Ayrton's work fisherman are objects for homoerotic desire; partially clothed and muscular. The allusion is perhaps made more explicit in *Mending Nets, Ischia*, with the inclusion of a fully nude couple whose arms clasp one another in the background.

The 'Italian Studies' exhibition also included *Portrait of Norman Douglas* (1948) (fig. 2). Douglas was a queer writer who had left Britain after being arrested in 1934 for a 'morals offence with a male minor'.<sup>11</sup> He subsequently made his home on the island of Capri, where Ayrton stayed with him, and may have completed this painting.<sup>12</sup> Ayrton's portrait of Douglas depicts the writer alongside two young male nudes, perhaps alluding to Douglas's sexual proclivities: he certainly took Italian boys as lovers while there.<sup>13</sup> In the months after Ayrton's solo show, the Hanover also sold a self-portrait by the artist, *Elysian Self-portrait (Midday)* (1949) (fig. 3). Ayrton's depiction of himself is subtly homoerotic: the figure is passive and becomes the object of the viewer's gaze and attraction. His hand gestures obliquely toward his genitals.



Fig. 4 – Eduard Bargheer, *Fischer am Strand*, 1949



Fig. 5 – Eduard Bargheer, *Fischer mit Netzen*, 1947

Several months later, the Hanover staged an exhibition of ‘The Italian Painter Edoardo Bargheer’. Bargheer was a queer artist from Germany, who had been a member of the Hamburg Secession before anti-Semitic pressure from the Nazi party forced them to disband.<sup>14</sup> He subsequently fled Germany and made his home in Ischia in 1939.<sup>15</sup> Within the body of work Bargheer produced contemporaneously to the exhibition are a group of pictures which foreground the eroticised figures of fishermen (figs. 4 & 5). In *Fischer am Strand* (1949) and *Fischer mit Netzen* (1947) familiar motifs reappear. The titular fishermen are depicted nude or partially clothed, with defined musculature and prominent buttocks. While I have not been able to definitively identify any of the Hanover works, *Fischer am Strand* may be ‘Figures on the Beach’, offered by the gallery for 20 guineas.<sup>16</sup> With the inclusion of several beach and harbour scenes, I think it likely that the illustrated works are representative of the imagery that was shown.<sup>17</sup>





Fig. 6 – Sigmund Pollitzer, *Untitled*, c. 1949

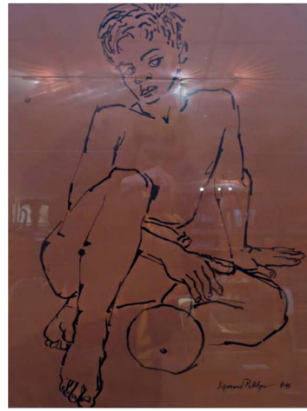


Fig. 7 – Sigmund Pollitzer, *Seated Boy*, 1948



Fig. 8 – Sigmund Pollitzer, *Line Study*, 1949

Later in 1949, the Hanover showed its first exhibition of work by Sigmund Pollitzer. Pollitzer was a British artist who was one of ‘a small group of homosexuals...betrayed to the police, tried and gaoled, not for corrupting the youth or any offence but engaging in homosexual acts in private’ during the war.<sup>18</sup> He left the country shortly thereafter and spent the rest of his life in Positano.<sup>19</sup> Pollitzer’s 1949 show took as its subject ‘*objets trouvés* - sunflowers...gourds, goat skulls and male figure studies’.<sup>20</sup> At least thirteen of the exhibited works were studies of young men (figs. 6, 7 and 8), with two models, Kemal and Tinos, appearing in multiple works. Pollitzer is known to have been “in the habit of consorting with prostitutes”, and I posit that these models may perhaps have shared this background.<sup>21</sup> His subjects are portrayed in a homoerotic fashion in each of the three examples illustrated, with splayed legs seeming to suggest sexual invitation. In both *Seated Boy* and *Untitled*, the figures are paired with phallic gourds. Certainly, Dino, a “particular love” of the artist, with whom he is known to have interacted for the purposes of prostitution, was one of the subjects in Ayrton’s subsequent 1951 exhibition with the Hanover, which again featured several studies of young male figures.<sup>22</sup>



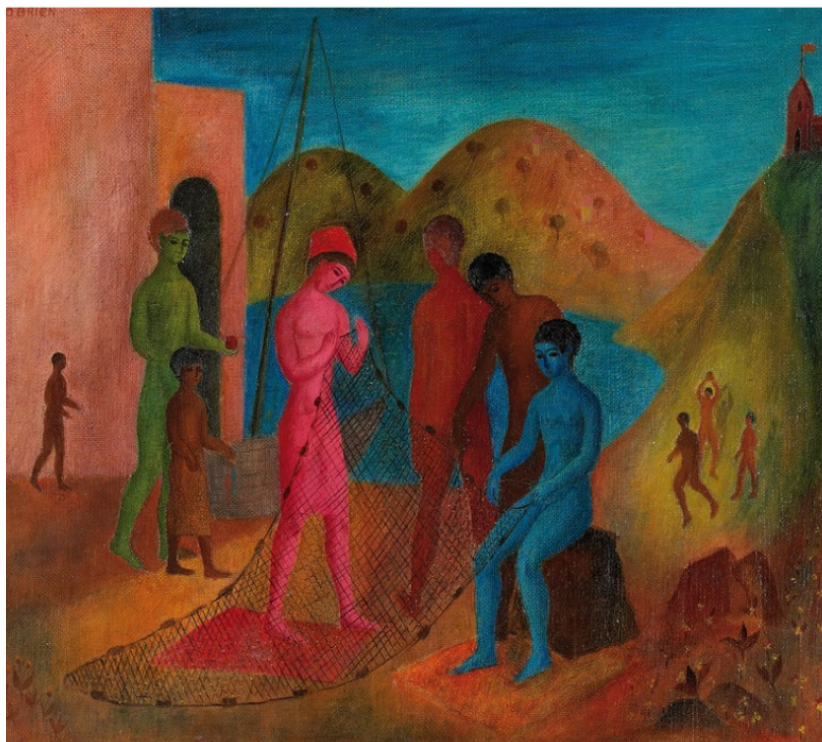


Fig. 9 – Justin O'Brien, *Mending of the Nets*, 1949



Fig. 10 – Justin O'Brien, *Boy in Costume*, c. 1949



Fig. 11– Justin O'Brien, *The Baptism of Christ*, 1949

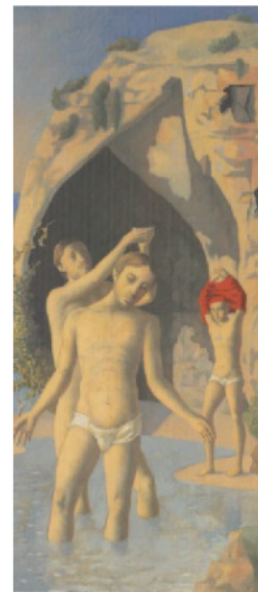


Fig. 12 – Justin O'Brien, *The Baptism of Christ*, 1951

Pollitzer was followed several months later by the first solo exhibition in the United Kingdom of the work of Australian artist Justin O'Brien. While O'Brien lived and worked in Australia until his 1967 move to Rome, the influence of a wartime spell in the Mediterranean is explicit in the work shown at the Hanover.<sup>23</sup> Several of the exhibited works once again foreground imagery of nude fishermen and young male figures (figs 9 & 10). These sensitively rendered depictions are less explicitly homoerotic than other examples being considered, although here again we see pronounced musculature and an idealised depiction of nude men engaged in masculine labour. Certainly, the development of O'Brien's treatment of his religious subjects suggests that he found eroticism within his material; his 1949 depiction of the *Baptism of Christ* (fig. 11) immediately seems to follow classical mores, although an oblique homoeroticism may be found in the inclusion of three young male nudes in the water behind the figure of Christ. However, by 1951, his treatment of the same subject is much more explicitly homoerotic (fig. 12).

In 1954, the Hanover played host to 'Portraits and Italy, Peter Todd Mitchell', an exhibition of work by the American artist and self-styled heir to Christian Berard. The exhibition featured several works in which Naples and its people were the primary subject. While I have not been able to identify exhibited works, contemporaneous images illustrate Mitchell working on an œuvre of tender, erotic images of young men from the locale (figs 13 & 14). Mitchell seems to have been supported by both Brausen and Jeffress, exhibiting again at the Hanover in 1957, and at Jeffress' own gallery in 1964. Both exhibitions featured similarly homoerotic imagery (fig. 15).

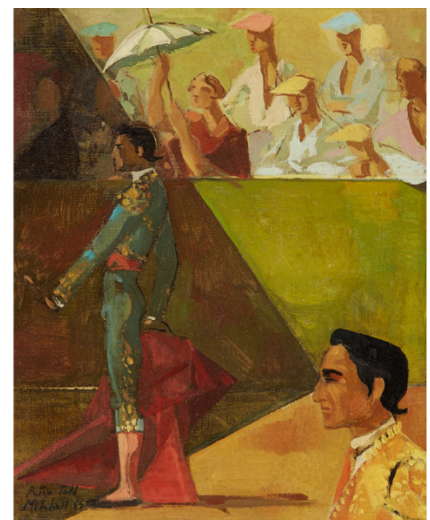
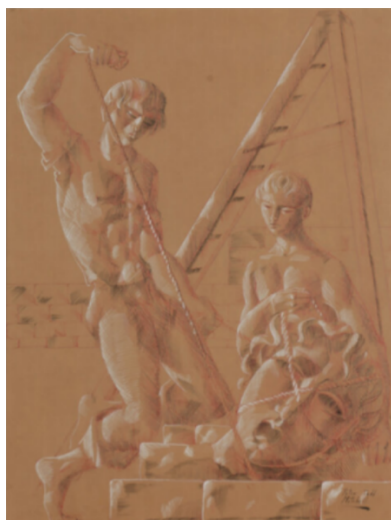




Fig. 13 – Peter Todd Mitchell, *Untitled*, mid 1950s

Fig. 14 – Peter Todd Mitchell, *Untitled*, 1954

Fig. 15 – Peter Todd Mitchell, *Corrida*, 1955

The group of artists working in and inspired by Italy form part of what Aldrich has termed the ‘seduction of the Mediterranean’, wherein homoeroticism in culture is set or located in the Mediterranean as an idyll apart from ‘reality’.<sup>24</sup> However, beyond this group of artists, the Hanover also exhibited a significant number of artists who illustrated homoeroticism much closer to home. The best known of these, of course, is Francis Bacon. Discovered by Brausen while she worked at the Redfern, Bacon was first shown by the Hanover in 1949, with exhibitions each year, but one, until he left for the Marlborough Gallery in 1959.

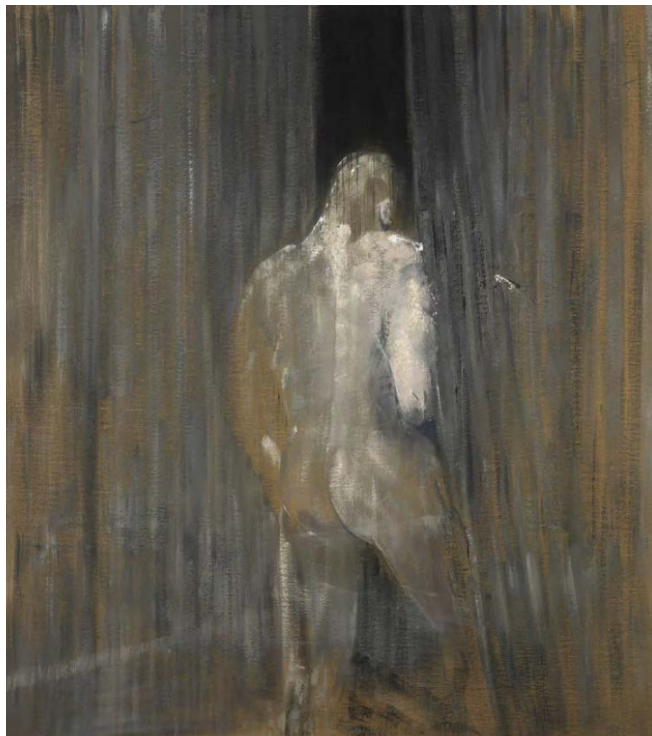


Fig. 16 – Francis Bacon, *Study from the Human Body*, 1949



Bacon's debut show in 1949 featured *Study from the Human Body* (1949) (fig. 16). The work is the earliest fully articulated male nude extant in Bacon's oeuvre, and a rare example of a male nude

painted by an ‘out’ male artist. Arya has noted that the nude figure, whether male or female, was an uncommon subject matter at the time.<sup>25</sup> This was reflected by contemporary accounts: Isabel Rawsthorne reviewed the show in a letter to Peter Rose Pulham: ‘Show is most impressive really. Especially large male nude walking through curtain. Quite unlike anything else.’<sup>26</sup> The musculature of the figure in *Study from the Human Body* is well-defined, calling to mind the artist’s use of bodybuilding magazines as image prompts.<sup>27</sup> The contemporary double function of these magazines as homosexual pornography adds a further layer of homoeroticism to the image.<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 17 – Francis Bacon, *Painting*, 1950

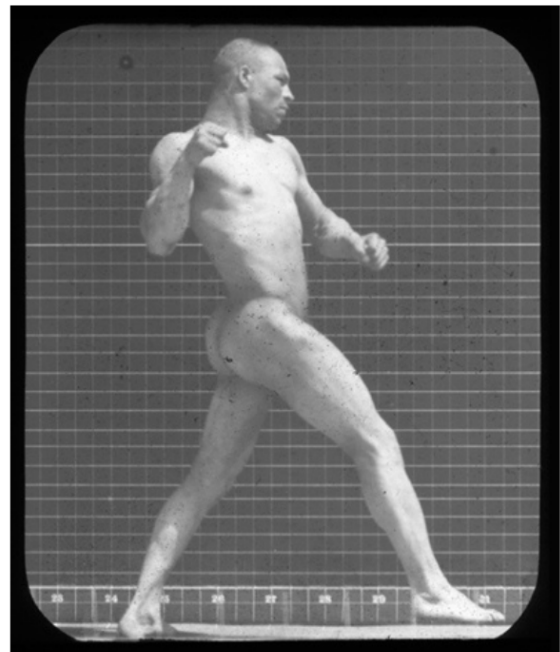


Fig. 18 – Eadward Muybridge, *Man, Punch*, nd.

Bacon’s source material was a broad and varied library, and Eadward Muybridge’s photographs of athletes and wrestlers were another significant source that also functioned as a substitute for homosexual pornography.<sup>29</sup> In works like *Painting* (1950) and *Study for a Figure* (1950), both shown in Bacon’s 1950 solo exhibition, Bacon adapts Muybridge’s imagery to create voyeuristic, anonymous and eroticised depictions of the male nude (figs. 17 & 18).<sup>30</sup>





Fig. 19 – Francis Bacon, *Man in Blue IV*, 1954



Fig. 20 – Francis Bacon, *Man in Blue V*, 1954

Beyond groundbreaking nudity, Bacon also captured a broader depiction of life as a queer man at the time. In June of 1954, the Hanover exhibited Bacon's *Man in Blue* series, which Salter has compellingly argued may represent the act of cruising: 'a moment of visual exchange and mutual recognition between anonymous individuals in [...] public spaces' (figs. 19 & 20).<sup>31</sup> The figure in this group was based upon a man whom Bacon had met in this fashion while staying at a hotel in Henley.<sup>32</sup> Salter suggests that the anonymity of the figure and repetition of the subject may be indicative of 'the experience of the homosexual pick-up, in its anonymity, repetition and public intimacy'.<sup>33</sup> This coding would likely have been apparent to the queer clientele of the Hanover, 'those who carefully scrutinised masculine styles for secreted evidences of homosexual availability'.<sup>34</sup>



Fig. 21 – Francis Bacon, *Study for Figure II*, 1953



Fig. 22 – Francis Bacon, *Two Figures*, 1953

Most explicit, however, was the gallery's *Bacon, Scott, Sutherland* show in 1955, which included the *Study for Figure* grouping from 1953 (fig. 21). This series of works studies a male figure reclining on a dishevelled bed: the subject was likely the artist's lover, Peter Lacy. The sexual implications of the bedroom setting are immediately apparent. Another work of 1953, *Two Figures* (1953) (fig. 22), made these allusions even more explicit, depicting two figures (possibly Bacon and Lacy) engaged in the act of sex. There are conflicting accounts of the Hanover's interaction with *Two Figures*. Salter suggests that it was exhibited, but 'hung [...] in the upper part of the gallery, half hidden from visitors who would have had to actively seek out the work in order to see it.'<sup>35</sup> Other accounts note that the gallery did not publicly sell the picture for fear of the potential recriminations.<sup>36</sup> Arya notes that alongside the inevitable controversy that this imagery would cause, 'In gay politics, it was a positive move, as it increased visibility of male homosexuality during a time when it was not seen in mainstream culture.'<sup>37</sup>



Fig. 23 – Robin Ironside, *Gondolas of Delos*, n.d.



Fig. 24 – Robin Ironside, *Break for Music*, 1953

Bacon's first show was hung alongside an exhibition of 'coloured drawings' by Robin Ironside, who exhibited with the Hanover until 1953 before departing to follow Arthur Jeffress to his later ventures.<sup>38</sup> Ironside's delicate Neo-Romantic works are less explicitly homoerotic in their content, but unexpressed passion can perhaps be found in the obsessively rendered sensuous figures which populate his imaginary worlds. In works like *Gondolas of Delos* (n.d.) and *Break for Music* (1953) (figs. 23 & 24) Ironside turns his baroque sensibility towards depictions of 'beautiful youths decomposing in overgrown gardens'.<sup>39</sup> These figures, clad in dishevelled clothing and with exquisite features, seem unquestionably to be the locus of homoerotic desire.





Fig. 25 – Keith Vaughan, *Mauvais Sang: An Illustration to Une Saison en Enfer*, 1940

Fig. 26 – Keith Vaughan, *Matin: An Illustration to Une Saison en Enfer*, 1943

Another artist whose work is suffused with homoerotic desire was Keith Vaughan, shown by the Hanover in early 1950. Vaughan's œuvre is characterised by homoerotic imagery, from an artist in whose work the male form held "an importance it had never known before in the history of British painting."<sup>40</sup> The gouaches shown at the Hanover had been commissioned for a new translation of Rimbaud's poem *Une Saison en Enfer*. The eight works in the show are characteristic Vaughan, portraying the poem's protagonist as a young male nude, progressing through a Sutherland-esque landscape (figs 25 & 26). The imagery of the torments suffered by the protagonist in several of these images may perhaps be linked to Vaughan's own preference for sadomasochism.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 27 – Lucian Freud, *Hercules*, 1948

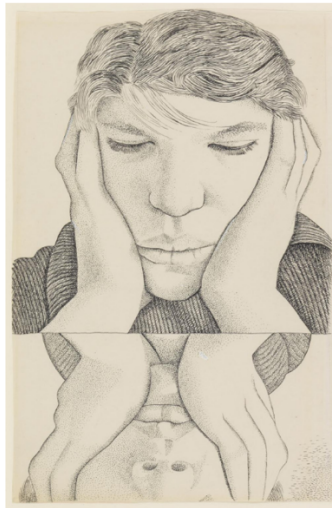


Fig. 28 – Lucian Freud, *Narcissus*, 1948



Fig. 29 – Lucian Freud, *Boy Smoking*, 1950

Lucian Freud, on the other hand, is less often thought of as an artist producing homoerotic work. However, it has been suggested that Freud deliberately created homoerotic work while he was shown at the Hanover, in order to appeal to Jeffress's queer clientele.<sup>42</sup> One note from Jeffress to Hanover artist Richard Chopping may support this theory: Jeffress advises Chopping that he has secured him a commission with a client who is 'really rather on the dotty side'. 'Lucian Freud can tell you about him as he is MAD about Lucian's pictures of youths [...]. He hunts...what, I don't know. Faberge and Freud.'<sup>43</sup> The 'pictures of youths' likely included two works on paper exhibited in the 1950 show: *Hercules* (1948) and *Narcissus* (1948) (figs 27 & 28). Both images depict Charlie Lumley,



the sitter for a number of Freud's works in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is possible that these works would have been particularly appealing to Jeffress's queer clientele. Lumley's status as a working-class boy played into the social mores of a time when eroticism was found for many queer men in the overt 'masculinity' of the working classes.<sup>44</sup> The exhibition also included a depiction of Lumley in oils, *Boy Smoking* (1950), purchased by queer business magnate Simon Sainsbury, who later donated the work to the Tate.<sup>45</sup>



Fig. 30 – Robert Medley, *Summer Eclogue No.1: Cyclists*, 1950

Several months after Freud's 1950 show, painter Robert Medley was exhibited at the Hanover. Medley's work too was homoerotic, but coded - a nod to those in the know. The 'recent paintings' included Medley's first two paintings of cyclists in London's public arenas, the *Summer Eclogues* (fig. 30).<sup>46</sup> As pointed out in the Tate's recent *Queer British Art* exhibition, in these works 'The river

esplanade offers a permissible space for observing the muscular bodies and taut limbs of the youths and their admirers. The title refers to Virgil's *Eclogues*, in which pastoral tranquility is disrupted by erotic forces and revolutionary change'.<sup>47</sup> One of the cyclists was based upon the figure of Ramsey McClure, Keith Vaughan's lover.<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 31 – Walter Stuempfig, *The Question* (newspaper clipping from the Hanover exhibition)

Another artist inspired by athleticism was American painter Walter Stuempfig, whose work was introduced to England by the Hanover in 1952. Stuempfig is also known for his work in landscape but painted a deep oeuvre of homoerotic depictions of the male figure. He had been discovered by R. Kirk Askew of the New York gallery, Durlacher Brothers, in the early 1940s. Askew too was queer, and one of Arthur Jeffress' friends - it is likely that this connection was how Stuempfig came to be exhibited at the Hanover.<sup>49</sup> Several of the works shown at the Hanover were sensual depictions of handsome young athletes (fig. 31).



Fig. 32 – Richard Chopping, *Pansies and Snails*, early 1950s

The year of 1952 was rounded out by an exhibition of ‘exquisite watercolours of wild flowers and the art of trompe l’oeil’ by painter Richard Chopping, shown alongside Bacon’s fourth solo exhibition.<sup>50</sup> Chopping was also openly queer: his partner, fellow artist Denis Wirth Miller, had spent time in prison for ‘gross indecency’ during the war.<sup>51</sup> His work often featured tongue-in-cheek allusions to his sexuality and to that of his clients: the two pansies in *Pansies and Snails* (early 1950s) (fig. 32) may be such an inside joke. Although the Hanover show was a sell-out success, Chopping chose to follow Arthur Jeffress when the gallerist left the Hanover to start up his own enterprise.<sup>52</sup> He was perhaps tempted by the pursuit of commissions from Jeffress’s queer clientele.<sup>53</sup>



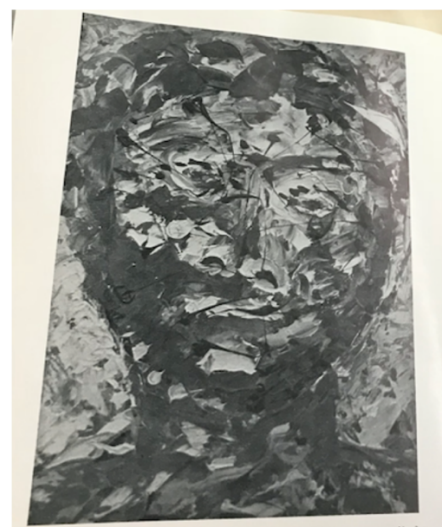
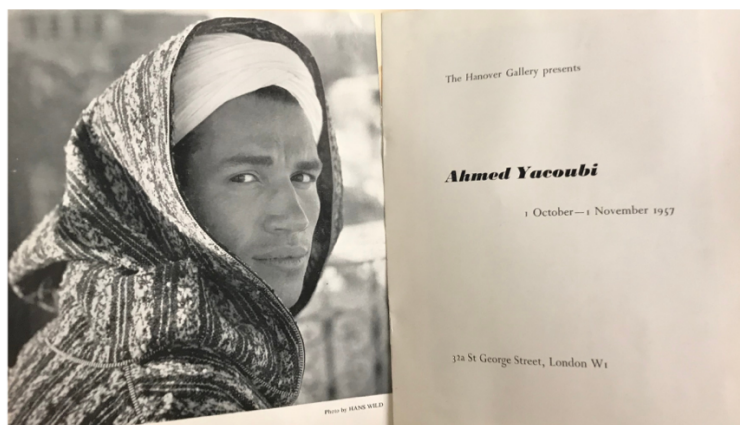


Fig. 33 – Ahmed Yacoubi, *Young Man*, n.d. (TGA)

In 1957, through his friendship with Bacon, Moroccan artist Ahmed Yacoubi was exhibited in London for the first time by the Hanover.<sup>54</sup> Yacoubi had previously been shown at the prestigious Betty Parsons Gallery in New York in an exhibition arranged by his lover, the novelist Paul Bowles; Bowles also wrote the catalogue text for the Hanover show.<sup>55</sup> Bacon had met Yacoubi in Tangiers, and from there wrote to Brausen: ‘Achmid [sic] has done some very good new paintings and it should be a very good show’.<sup>56</sup> Uncharacteristically, the Hanover’s catalogue for Yacoubi’s exhibition was prefaced with a headshot of the artist (fig. 33). This decision may perhaps have been made to capitalise upon his good looks: Morrocco was another mecca for queer sexual tourism and Yacoubi’s traditional garb in the photograph may perhaps have coded significance in this light.<sup>57</sup> Yacoubi’s work is largely characterised by a highly abstracted style, but notably at least four of the paintings exhibited at the Hanover took boys as their subject (fig. 34).





Fig. 34 – Richard Hamilton, *Towards a definitive statement on the coming trends in men's wear and accessories (c) Adonis in Y-fronts, 1962*

In 1964, Richard Hamilton had his second solo show with the Hanover gallery. Titled 'Slip it to me', the exhibition was a retrospective of Hamilton's work spanning the previous decade. Hamilton's œuvre was powerfully influenced by queer culture. In *Just what is it*, 1956, the figure of a male bodybuilder is foregrounded as the image of ideal masculinity. Stonard identified the source of the collaged male figure as *Tomorrow's Man*, a soft-core 'posing strap' publication.<sup>58</sup> Other works, including *Adonis in Y-fronts* (1962), drew upon the 'increasing [positioning of] the male body as a site of consumerist desire in advertising, and allude to their queer appeal (fig. 34).<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the heritage for much of Hamilton's early iconic pop has queer roots. Unexhibited homoerotic works by Eduardo Paolozzi and the photography of Cecil Beaton were two likely sources of inspiration.<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Katz has argued that the title of the exhibition has double meaning, suggesting that it can also be interpreted literally, in the context of the queer subtext of Hamilton's œuvre, as a sexual invitation.<sup>61</sup>

The Hanover's connection to queer male artists and images of male homoerotic desire is hard to ignore. Lesser evident is the gallery's connection to queer female artists. In 1952, the gallery showed queer Irish painter Nano Reid. Reid's androgynous moniker belied her gender: her œuvre of landscape painting often featured the inclusion of the nude female figure (fig. 35).<sup>62</sup> I have not been able to identify any of the works shown by Reid at the Hanover, and it is possible that these female

subjects may not have been exhibited. However, she is the first of several queer female artists exhibited by Brausen at the gallery.



Fig. 35 – Nano Reid, *Forest Pool*, 1946

In the latter half of 1953, the Hanover staged the first solo show by Italian born sculptor Fiore de Henriquez.<sup>63</sup> Henriquez had been born intersex, and had predominantly queer relationships.<sup>64</sup> While her gender identity was only made publicly known toward the end of her life, she was known for her adoption of male dress; according to Christopher Isherwood she “dressed like a male peasant in *Cavalleria Rusticana*.”<sup>65</sup> De Henriquez’ outward androgyny drew her critique in the press; references were made to her “mannish” appearance and “broad shoulders”.<sup>66</sup> However, she had attained popularity as a sculptor of great skill. By the time of the Hanover exhibition, Henriquez had had two works in the Royal Academy summer show of 1950 and had been invited by Jacob Epstein to make three figures for the Festival of Britain.<sup>67</sup> De Henriquez is best known for her work sculpting well known figures including Margot Fonteyn and Augustus John, but her practice also extended to work dealing with her own gender identity. Bicameralism became the subject in various works studying paired heads, conjoined figures and ambiguous mythical creatures.<sup>68</sup> Even her choice of medium was a means to explore her complex gender identity: ‘Clay is very soft and pliable, so feminine... It then becomes plaster, more virile and rigid... Later it becomes feminine again, as ... wax... Then il bronzo, again masculine, hard. From feminine to masculine, over and again.’<sup>69</sup> The Hanover

exhibition was one of few ever staged, and featured ‘some rather conventional heads; softer, less formal busts, mostly in terra cotta; small plaques...two lead statues...[and]... a bust of Augustus John.’<sup>70</sup> I have not been able to identify any examples of work dealing with ‘doubling’, although these may have been shown.

Several months later, the gallery hosted the first solo exhibition in London of British artist, and compatriot of Piet Mondrian, Marlow Moss. The artist was also openly queer and known for her adoption of male dress.<sup>71</sup> Press coverage of Moss’s shows at the Hanover hint at her queer identity: a review of the exhibition by the art critic John Russell, began “I did not know, till I went to the Hanover Gallery, whether Marlow Moss was a man, a woman, or a vegetable growth”.<sup>72</sup> Moss’s gender was also under attack. In a later review, Russell writes “Painting of this sort, with its precision, its nice calculations and its perfection of finish, could be called a department of the housewifely arts; but Miss Moss’s exhibit radiates[...] a distinction of mind which makes her much more than a follower of her master.”<sup>73</sup> This same quality is elsewhere described as “uncompromising” by a commentator who mistook Moss for a male artist.<sup>74</sup> Keith Sutton reiterated the “housewifely” barb in another review; “In the paintings, the strictly rectilinear areas of near primary colours are given more genteel functions than was the case with Mondrian[....] The idea of geometry is used rather like a housewife with an effective hygienic gadget.”<sup>75</sup>

Despite the lack of commercial success for the 1953 exhibition, the Hanover continued to deal Moss’s work until her death in 1958, giving her a second solo show that year.<sup>76</sup> She was also exhibited in a group show alongside many of the Hanover’s contemporary sculpture stars and, through the gallery, was shown in New York and Switzerland.<sup>77</sup> Moss’s legacy has been neglected until recent years, and her work is underrepresented in the collections of British museums.<sup>78</sup> Brausen seems to have personally gone out of her way to correct this. Of the three works held by the Tate Gallery in their permanent collection, two, *Composition in Yellow, Black and White* (1949) and *Balanced Forms in Gunmetal on Cornish Granite* (1956-57) were donated by the gallerist from her personal collection in 1969.<sup>79</sup>

Continuing their representation of marginalised queer female artists, the Hanover exhibited the work of Florence Henri in 1967. Henri had been one of the most important Surrealist photographers and was a friend of Brausen’s, whose portrait she had shot in 1931.<sup>80</sup> The works exhibited at the



Hanover were Henri's 'small paintings', much less popular than her photography, and rarely exhibited in her lifetime.<sup>81</sup> Brausen seems to have also gone out of her way to rectify this, showing the paintings again at her Swiss partnership with the Gimpel brothers in 1973 and at Art Basel that same year.<sup>82</sup>



Fig. 36. - Leonor Fini, *Le long du chemin*, 1967

Fig. 37 – Leonor Fini, *Il S'Agit sans doute d'Azraël*, 1967

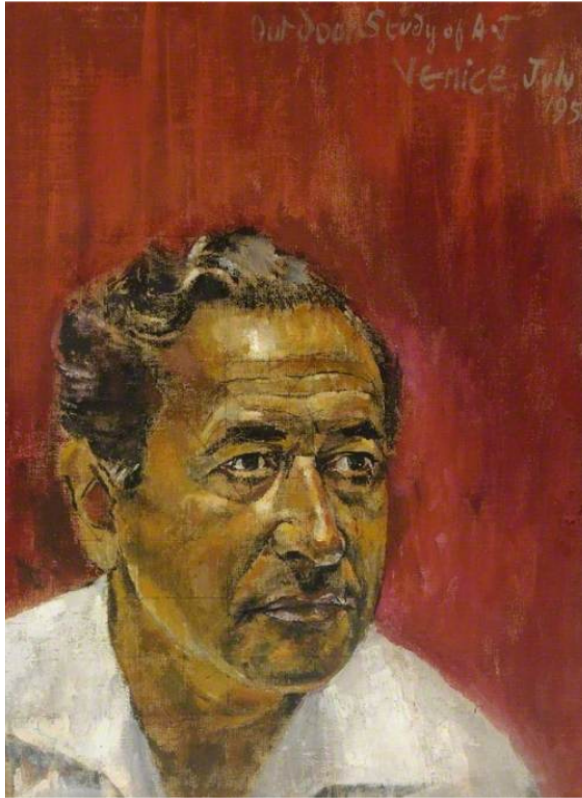
Later that year, the Hanover exhibited the work of Leonor Fini. Fini had relationships with both men and women, saying that she was 'open to anything', and was one of the few artists active in the twentieth century who depicted 'female same-sex desire as passionate and powerful'.<sup>83</sup> This takes on additional significance in relation to Fini's association with the Surrealists, whose leader Andre Breton was homophobic, and who, as a group, were generally hostile toward homosexual artists.<sup>84</sup> Like Henri, Fini's popularity had dwindled over the years. The show at the Hanover was only the second that Fini had had in London, but it came late in her exhibiting career.<sup>85</sup> It was Fini's last solo show in the United Kingdom before her death in 1996.<sup>86</sup> The exhibited works were a depiction of 'Fini's own Sapphic world of feminine nudes' (figs. 36 & 37).<sup>87</sup>

Reviews of the show contained homophobic language. Robert Hughes of the Observer wrote that: 'thirty years ago, Leonor Fini's work had, at least, a debilitated bloom of perversity which gave it

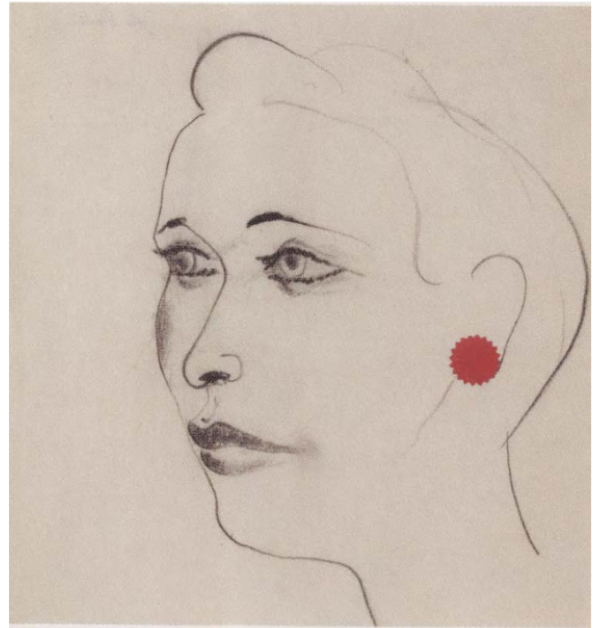
some slight interest as boudoir art. Today, as her show at Hanover Gallery makes clear, it's just postcard'.<sup>88</sup> Artists to this day question whether it is possible to represent female same-sex desire without its only perceived value being 'soft pornography' for heterosexual men, and Hughes' review certainly provides grounds for this concern.<sup>89</sup> Edward Lucie Smith wrote of the same show that 'women artists, I note, hate being called "women artists", except perhaps Leonor Fini, whose exhibition at the Hanover Gallery is a strange mixture of the sweet and the perverse.'<sup>90</sup> The repetition of the adjective 'perverse' in relation to lesbian imagery betrays the continuation of homophobia in art criticism, even into the late 1960s.

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In this paper I have demonstrated that the Hanover Gallery was a supportive platform for queer artists, and for artists who produced homoerotic imagery in post-war London. For many of the artists in question, the Hanover exhibitions were among few in their exhibiting careers, and many have rarely been shown since. During the research for this paper, I found that much of the Hanover's activity in this field was related to Jeffress and his clientele, a network of queer aesthetes who actively collected work by queer artists. However, even after Jeffress's departure, Brausen continued to exhibit a cutting-edge program which afforded opportunities and a prominent platform to queer artists. While, unquestionably, the work exhibited by Bacon in the 1950s was without precedent or comparison in its explicit depictions of homosexual sex, in this paper I have illustrated that many other Hanover artists were also tackling the subject matter of homoerotic desire. I argue that Brausen and Jeffress, two queer gallerists whose own lives were affected by sexuality-based discrimination, used the Hanover Gallery as a way to afford opportunities to artists who dealt with the same concerns. Far from avoiding 'feelthy pictures', Brausen and Jeffress actively staged exhibitions by queer artists, introducing the gallery going public to imagery they may otherwise never have seen.



L – Graham Sutherland, *Arthur Jeffress*, 1953



R – Oriel Ross, *Portrait of Erica Brausen*, c. 1948



## **Endnotes**

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