

The Fleming Collection, London

7 July to 5 September 2009

Sir MUIRHEAD BONE HRSA, HRWS, HRE (1876-1953)

In an age when the art of drawing has been downgraded by many art schools to the point of extinction, the work of Muirhead Bone has been all but forgotten except by a relatively small number of dedicated collectors. One of the most prominent artists of the first half of the twentieth century, Bone was a consummate draughtsman. Lord Clark described him as the only British artist who stood comparison with the great Italian draughtsman, Piranesi. Curated by Bill Smith, former Keeper of Art at The Fleming Collection, this exhibition seeks to raise awareness of Bone's technical mastery and revive the reputation of this much-neglected artist.

Bone was born in Glasgow, but spent most of his working life in London and the south of England. After early training as an architect, he turned to art, concentrating on printmaking, as well as watercolours and drawings. He was fascinated by the demolition of old buildings and the construction of new ones, producing dramatic drawings and prints of architectural subjects, such as *The Great Gantry* and *A Manhattan Excavation*. His prints were avidly collected both in Britain and America during the first three decades of the twentieth century until the print market was killed off by the Wall Street Crash of 1929. In 1916 he was appointed the first British war artist, producing hundreds of sketches and watercolours of the Western Front, the Fleet in the Firth of Forth, shipbuilding on the Clyde and the war effort in factories the length and breadth of Britain. He was also an Official War Artist during the Second World War, on one occasion hurriedly recalled to London from Scotland after the devastating raid by the Luftwaffe on 29 December 1940 to record *St Bride's and the City after the fire*. In peacetime he travelled extensively, particularly in Italy and Spain, producing numerous watercolours, drawings and prints of the places visited by him and his wife.

During much of his life Bone was an important figure in the art world, particularly as collector and patron. He supported and encouraged many young artists, such as Stanley Spencer, Jacob Epstein, Mark Gertler and David Bomberg. Bone was a trustee of the Tate Gallery, the National Gallery and the Imperial War Museum.

The exhibition will feature watercolours, drawings and prints, and several examples of the few oil paintings that Bone executed, drawn from a number of public and private collections in Britain. It will also include work by several artists who were helped by Bone in their early career.