

## From Aberdare to Swansea and a magical Merlin, eminent paintings accepted for the nation

The Glynn Vivian has also acquired two dramatic pastels which were accepted in lieu from the estate of his widow, Eleonore Marie Herman.

Albert Irvin was a prolific abstract artist. After a spell in the RAF as a navigator during World War 2, he returned to his passion for art and began a career spanning over 50 years. He became well known for his use of exuberant colours and energetic brushstrokes in his vibrant pieces.

The acquisition of Merlin 1987 is a welcome addition to Amgueddfa Cymru's impressive collection of abstract art. The Museum already has one of the UK's most important collections of modern and contemporary art, but until now this did not include work from Albert Irvin. The vivid and bold painting will feature in changing displays of twentieth century British art in the Museum's modern galleries, as well as temporary exhibitions from the collections in the Museum's new wing for contemporary art which opened in 2011.

Andrew Renton, Keeper of Art at Amgueddfa Cymru, said:

“We are delighted to now represent Albert Irvin in our collections and Merlin will join the Museum's outstanding collection of post-war abstract painting. We are very grateful to the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme which is one of the most important ways of developing Wales' national collection and ensuring our audiences have access to the very best art.”

The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea was also successful in its bid for another painting by Albert Irvin from the same offer – Aberdare 1988. This wonderfully colourful piece will sit alongside modern painting and sculpture by Hepworth, Nicholson and Nash. The allocation of 'Aberdare 1988' enhances the Glynn Vivian's dynamic exhibitions already on offer to the public. It will be displayed as part of a rolling programme of exhibitions.

The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery has also been successful in securing a further allocation through the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme. Two pastels which represent rare scenes of village life in Ystradgynlais, Swansea Valley during the 1940's by artist Josef Herman have found a permanent home there.

Josef Herman was born in Warsaw in 1911. As a Polish Jewish Émigré he fled Nazi Europe to escape anti-Semitism and arrived in Britain in 1940 where he settled in Glasgow. In 1944 he visited Ystradgynlais on holiday – and made it his home until 1955, he said. 'I stayed here (in Ystradgynlais) because I found all I required. I arrived here a stranger for a fortnight; the fortnight became 11 years'. He became a big part of the local community and

he was fondly nicknamed 'Joe Bach'.

Herman is perhaps best remembered for his dramatic observations of the coal mining industry and communities in South Wales during the post war period, The two pastels complement the Glynn Vivian's existing holdings of his work and its wider collection also includes work by many important artists in Wales who were Herman's contemporaries, providing a unique history of Welsh art in the 20th century.

Prior to the acceptance and permanent allocation of the Herman pastels to the Glynn Vivian Gallery, they had been on loan and have been exhibited in the main gallery since May 2017. The pastels are currently not on display but the public can make applications to see them in the accessible stores. A planned programme of exhibitions will see the Josef Herman works reinstalled in the gallery in due course.

Jenni Spencer-Davies, Curator at the Glynn Vivian said:

"We are delighted to welcome these important works into the Gallery's collection. Josef Herman and his wife, Nini, often visited our gallery, and two beautiful pastels are testament to his love for painting working people, especially miners and those close to the land. It is therefore very meaningful that these works will now be enjoyed by our communities in Swansea.

"I first met Albert Irvin, in 1990, when we presented a major exhibition of his work which had been curated by the Serpentine Gallery in London. I recall Bert talking about his visit to Aberdare, so it is very special for us to be gifted this wonderful large-scale abstract work, entitled Aberdare (1988), inspired by his visit to Wales. This was the period when the artist had reached his prime, and following the exhibition, he visited Wales often, lecturing with incredible passion on his love of colour and the processes in his paintings."

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

"It's a pleasure to accept these important works for the nation and I'm delighted that they will further enhance the excellent collections that already exist at both Amgueddfa Cymru and the Glynn Vivian. The Acceptance in Lieu Scheme has been of significant benefit to the people of Wales. A diverse range of collections, objects and archives have been acquired in recent years by Amgueddfa Cymru, local authorities and the National Trust in Wales. These items will be preserved and enjoyed in to prosperity by all."

Edward Harley, Chairman, Acceptance in Lieu Panel. Said:

“Josef Herman made a great impact on the art of South Wales during his 11 years in Ystradgynlais. These two pastels make a significant and appropriate addition to the Glynn Vivian’s collection and will help tell the story of European refugees living in Britain during the Second World War. It is also fantastic to see the first work by Albert Irvin enter the Welsh national collection where it will join a rich holding of 20th century British art. It is an immense pleasure to see the Acceptance in Lieu scheme used to secure such important works for the nation.”