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# COFFEE CULTURES

N° 01

CATALOGUE



Sotheby's  
INSTITUTE OF ART

# Coffee Cultures

## Catalogue Essay

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The trading and consumption of coffee has shaped our personal and collective histories. European social, economic, cultural and political histories were to be greatly altered as a result of its colonial trade in the commodity. However, their trading and consumption patterns were also to deeply transform the histories of the peoples and nations that traded with them. The ubiquity of coffee and cafes of both past and present suggests a sense of egalitarianism, but as Pendergrast notes, the European foray into all aspects of coffee is indeed paradoxical: “the French Revolution and the American Revolution were planned in coffeehouses...that same coffee that was fueling the French Revolution was also being produced by African slaves who had been taken to San Domingo [now Haiti].” While we are acutely aware of this dichotomy created by coffee, from its production to consumption, we will focus this essay on three inter-related aspects of coffee cultures from a historical perspective and its association with art. First, we will look at the availability of coffee in Europe, coming from the Arabian Peninsula, and how this changed European consumption habits. The second section will explore European coffeehouses as hot beds of new political and intellectual discussions, and also a place where artists drew inspiration. With its counterpoint across Asia, Turkish coffee houses were not only places in which influential and transformative ideas developed but they also took on local characteristics. Section three will explore coffee houses from a non-European perspective to understand their function. Coffee Cultures thus presents 15 carefully selected works of art and one commissioned piece to illustrate that coffee facilitates social and cultural transformation. In conjunction with the artworks selected, this essay presents the perspective that the enjoyment and consumption of coffee can be seen across many cultural and social settings. We hope this catalogue will be a springboard for conversations, contemplation and new ideas whether on individually or with friends and with coffee in hand.

## Cultural Shifts and Coffee

Coffee arrived into the Mediterranean region in the 17th century, from the Arabian peninsula, and moved north into Europe, as a result of Venetian merchants. Initially, the consumption of coffee was confined to the European nobility. Coffee was an acquired taste: Princess Elizabeth Charlotte of Orleans compared coffee to “soot and lupin beans.” Despite the bitterness of coffee, its popularity soon spread from the royal courts to the bourgeoisie with the coffeehouse of the 17th century as the catalyst. The decline of coffee prices due to increasing production in the British and

French colonies, further facilitated the adoption of the beverage across European socio-economic classes. The lithograph by Jonathan Needham (see Exhibition Catalogue) shows the geographic spread of coffee production under the auspices of the British, as far as Sri Lanka. Today, Sri Lanka is best known for its tea production, but prior to tea plantations, coffee was the primary commodity from the 1840s to late 1860s, before disease killed the plants. The growing popularity of coffee from the 17th century onwards must be seen in the context of other commodities, such as sugar and tea, traded by European colonial merchants. Sugar made coffee much more acceptable to the European palate. Thus, the increased production of coffee and other commodities from the colonies facilitated gastronomic and cultural changes in Europe.

The spread of coffee culture in Europe worked hand-in-hand with innovations in dining culture: the consumption of coffee demanded new table ware. Carole Shammas argues that the growth of the “hot drinks culture” i.e. tea, coffee and hot chocolate, symbolised and was a causal factor in the changes to the European domestic environment of the 18th century. This change in the domestic environment is marked by the spread of Chinese porcelain. Chinese porcelain was regarded as superior to tin or silver because it did not alter the taste of the food. Porcelain ware was also first adopted by the royal courts but soon spread across the different socio-economic classes, as German and English centres of porcelain manufacturing emerged. An example of this cultural change facilitated by coffee, can be seen in Figure 4. This set of 18th century coffee ware came from Jingdezhen in China—the premiere centre of export ceramic manufacturing—shipped to England, where decorations suiting English taste was applied. This example, demonstrates the nature of cultural interaction and changes with coffee as a catalyst.

## European Coffeehouses

European coffeehouses are often associated with the Enlightenment period. With Venice opening the first European coffeehouse in 1647, it soon spread across other European cities. The coffeehouse was a public social house, much like alehouses of the time, but they served a much richer function. With the provision of newspapers, books and journals to its customers, coffeehouses also acted as a node in which bourgeois gentlemen gathered to discuss and debate politics and ideas. Coffeehouses were critical in the creation of “public spheres,” the precursor to modern day civil society. The development of the European public sphere coincided with the emergence of capitalism where the state

became increasingly distant from society. This public sphere was made possible by the culture of the European bourgeoisie which valued intellectual and literary debates in the coffeehouses, salons and in print media. Bourgeois culture fostered rational political debates and paved the way for democracy to take shape and ultimately upheld the ideals of the Enlightenment period – equality, justice and political rights to all. Figure 15 (see Exhibition Catalogue) demonstrates a much more contemporary interpretation of the coffeehouse. Nonetheless, Guttuso shows us that intellectual figures still feature prominently in Rome’s oldest café (est. 1760), even in the 20th century. Guttuso’s painting highlights that cafes continue to be social public houses, long after the first European coffeehouse opened its doors in 1647.

## Beyond European Coffeehouses

While coffeehouses outside of Europe also served a social function, local needs and contexts are important elements to consider. Coffee first came to Turkey in the 15th century during the Ottoman Empire, brought in by merchants travelling the Silk Route between Asia and Europe. With the first Turkish coffeehouse opening in the mid-16th century, they reflect four distinct characteristics of Turkish culture: 1) meeting secular and religious needs of the community; 2) offering recreation, communication and community cohesion; 3) male dominated and; 4) rural-urban differences. Distinct from their European counterparts—where coffeehouses were places where political strategies were discussed to overthrow monarchies, divined by god—Turkish coffeehouses offered a secular as well as a religious function, located within close proximities to mosques. Figure 5 shows the recreation and social activity taking place inside a male dominated Turkish coffeehouse.

## Conclusion

The global trade and consumption of coffee today is predicated on an earlier global history of coffee, spanning nearly six centuries. The trading of coffee since the 1500s has generated interconnections and interactions across diverse cultures. The artworks in Coffee Cultures demonstrate these points of exchange but also show coffee is a material in which artists create and a source of inspiration (see Figures 1 and 16). The exhibition highlights all aspects of coffee from an artistic perspective—from its cultivation to it being a source of intellectual and artistic inspiration—with works spanning all media and time periods. As a commodity that travels across social contexts, as well as cultures and time, we invite continual exploration of how coffee can facilitate new forms of exchanges between individuals, social and cultural groups in the 21st century, and where more appropriate than cafes?



# Study for ‘*Soffio di Creta*’ ‘Breath of Clay’

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Giuseppe Penone (b. 1947) is associated with the Arte Povera movement. Arte Povera was coined by Gemano Celant in 1967 to describe a movement in which some Italian artists embraced through their rejection of traditional art materials and techniques. Instead, artists like Penone turned to daily objects and raw materials for inspiration and creation.

Penone’s work revolves around the idea of establishing contact between man and nature. Most of his work of the 1970s explored the nature of skin as a container of one’s body separating oneself from their surroundings. His *Soffio / Breath* sculptures of 1978 and their accompanied drawings titled *Breath of Clay* demonstrates his interest as a sculptor using the skin as a point of inspiration for creation.

Figure 1: Study for ‘*Soffio di Creta*’ (*Breath of Clay*)

Support: 76.2 cm x 56.8 cm;

Frame: 95.8 cm x 75.1 cm x 3.1 cm

Artist: Giuseppe Penone

Date: 1978

Medium: Coffee, graphite and ink on paper

Loc.: Tate

This artwork forms part of the series of drawings titled *Breath of Clay* for the *Breath* sculptures, which are large terracotta pieces. These works represented the volume of the breath against his body, materialised in clay and formed in a vase-like shape. The series of drawings document the thinking process behind the sculpture. These drawings were created using coffee, illustrating his belief that man and nature are one and that culture is not distinct from nature.

This painting is one of the two key works selected for *Coffee Cultures*. The use of coffee as the medium to complete his art work illustrates Penone’s ability to blur and collapse the boundary between art and life, typical of the Arte Povera movement.

# Peacock Hill, Coffee Estate - Gampola in the distance

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Peacock Hill, Coffee Estate -  
Gampola in the distance  
Dims: 25.2 x 37.8cm  
Lithographer: Jonathan Needham  
(fl.1850-1874)  
Medium: Lithograph  
Date: 1864  
Loc.: British Library

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# Coffee fields in Brazil during flowering season

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Dims: 24 x 35cm  
Photographer:  
Sebastião Salgado  
Medium: Photograph  
Loc.: London, Beetles +  
Huxley Gallery

The coffee plant while not indigenous to Sri Lanka, has existed on the island prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505. It was not until the 1830s when the British started to cultivate coffee in Sri Lanka, coinciding with the decrease in coffee supply from the West Indies due to the abolition of slavery. Consequently, British experimentation of coffee plantation in Ceylon took off with resounding success. This lithograph work by Jonathan Needham of Peacock Hill in 1864 shows us not just a grand mountain view but also the day-to-day function of the plantation, including the workers. Needham produced his lithograph based on the sketches by Captain C. O'Brien, late Assistant Surveyor General of Ceylon. The accompanying text gives us a detailed insight into the workings of the plantation: "On the left is the superintendent's bungalow;

through the coffee are seen the stumps of the larger trees of the felled forest. In front of the stove are the drying grounds, on which the 'parchment' coffee is spread. The coolies are seen carrying their loads up the steps of the 'pulping-house'".

However, due to "coffee rust," a leaf disease which had spread throughout the plantations by the 1870s, the booming coffee industry was destroyed. Plantation owners, like the ones of Peacock Hill began to look for other cash crops to sustain the plantation, and thus found tea as a suitable replacement.

This lithograph can be seen in conjunction with the photograph by Sebastião Salgado, as a comparative view of the coffee plantation of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.



# Coffee Cups



Artist:/Maker: Jefferyes Hamett  
O'Neale (probably); Made in  
Jingdezhen, decorated in Chelsea  
Medium: Porcelain  
Date: 1740–1755 (circa); 1755–1770  
(painted)  
Loc.: British Museum

Dims: Height: 13.5 cm (teapot); Height: 6.5 cm (coffe cup); Height: 4 cm (tea cup);  
Diameter: 13 cm (teapot-stand); Diameter: 12 cm (saucers)

Although the consumption of coffee gained popularity throughout Europe in the 18th century, it nonetheless made its impact across all continents. This set of Chinese porcelain coffee wares is proof of how coffee spread across time and cultures. Coming from China's famous porcelain-making center Jingdezhen (1740–1755, early years of Qing Dynasty), this porcelain set consists of a teapot, teapot stand, three coffee cups, two tea cups and three saucers. After travelling from China, to England (possibly to Kentish Town, London), the English workshop received this set where paint and decoration was applied to the plain white pieces, presumably by Jefferyes Hamett O'Neale (1734–1801). With beautiful golden rim borders painted on every unit, the painted scenes are all different on each piece and are based on theatrical characters of the Italian 'commedia dell'arte.' These characters include Harlequin, in the multi-colored chequered

costume and mask; Columbine in a long pink dress and Columbine's lover. A closer inspection shows Harlequin's arm reaching out from a coffin in one of the coffee cups.

This set of porcelain works highlights a wonderful combination of different cultures and handicraft arts, achieving a natural balance of porcelain and paint/decoration, through which coffee is a central element and inspiration.

In 1887, Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks donated this set to the British Museum, but it is seldom exhibited. This set has only travelled twice after they arrived into the British Museum's collection: for the Ancient Chinese Trade Ceramics exhibition at Taiwan in 1994, and the other is for Britain Meets the World: 1714–1830 at Palace Museum Beijing in 2007. The Coffee Cultures exhibition sheds new light on the connection of cultures, as embodied in this set.

# A Turkish Coffee-House, Constantinople



Dims: 40.7 x 58.8 cm  
Object: Watercolour  
Place of origin: Turkey  
Date: 1854 (painted)  
Artist:Aloysius Rosarius  
Amadeus Raymondus  
Andreas Preziosi 5th  
Ct. Preziosi (1816–1882)  
Medium: Pencil and  
watercolour  
Loc.: V&A

Preziosi (1816–1882) was a Maltese painter known for his watercolours and prints of the Balkans, Ottoman Empire and Romania. He was acclaimed for his vibrant and evocative images of diverse nationalities and cultures in the city of Istanbul. Many 19th century Western European travellers took his drawings home as souvenirs of their visit.

This painting is a fine example of Preziosi's work of contemporary Ottoman life in the 19th century. The scene is swiftly sketched with accurate details portraying people of diverse nationalities engaging in a variety of social activities inside the coffee house. They are either in groups or seated individually. Those portrayed include musicians, local merchants and a beggar woman, amongst others. The coffee house is a luxurious 19th-century structure with coffee equipment clearly depicted: nargile

with spare tubes, water-pot, stove and charcoal, coffee cup and its holder.

This is a perfect piece selected for the Coffee Cultures exhibition because it demonstrates that coffee facilitates socialisation and conversation. Coffee was first introduced to Istanbul in the 1500s during the Ottoman Empire. Coffee n became a vital part of the Ottoman imperial culture but soon spread to the grand mansions, homes and led to the establishment of coffee houses.

This painting demonstrates coffee houses and coffee culture became an integral part of Istanbul social culture with people enjoying coffee together or individually.



# A Lady in a Garden Taking Coffee with some Children



Dims: 88.9 x 97.8 cm  
Artist: Nicolas Lancret  
Medium: oil on canvas  
Year: probably 1742  
Loc.: National Gallery UK

Nicolas Lancret (1690–1743) was an important Rococo French artist and one of the chief followers of Jean-Antoine Watteau in early 18th century in France, producing fêtes galante in a style similar to that of Watteau.

Rococo painting is part of the French artistic movement of the early 18th century and is characterised by soft colors and curvilinear forms with playful and witty themes. Watteau, the father of Rococo painting, invented the fêtes galante genre, which explored the psychology of love, usually in a landscape setting with the open-ended subject matter.

Lancret painted aristocrats engaged in playful pursuits. This painting, one of Lancret's most ambitious works and often considered

his masterpiece, was exhibited at the Salon of 1742. The scene depicts a family taking coffee in an idealised park setting popularised by Watteau's prints and paintings. The key aspect of this painting is its informality with the landscape and the figures occupying the left part of the composition. A woman, (presumably the mother) teaching two young children taking coffee, while a man (presumably the father) holds out a tray to a servant with a silver coffee pot. The work is representative of the Rococo style: a harmony of pastel colours, painterly style with the charming subject matter of a young girl, surrounded by her family trying her first coffee. This painting depicts an aristocratic family enjoying coffee in a garden, demonstrating the widespread nature of coffee in France by the mid-18th century.

# The Coffee Bearer

Femininity and delicacy represents the work of John Frederick Lewis' (1804 –1876), The Coffee Bearer. John Frederick Lewis is known for capturing the feelings of the people he painted. A resident of Cairo for 10 years, he became accustomed to painting the scenes he often observed. The friendly-looking woman smiles as she holds a tray of coffee, standing under an archway with Egyptian designs and details. The background depicts a natural landscape. She wears typical Eastern clothing of the time, a piece of fabric tied around the waist over the top of a tunic. Both garments were typical women's wear and the more ornate the garments were, the higher her social standing. In spite of the Eastern dress, there are suggestions that she may not be Egyptian, such as her pale skin. Her smile is intriguing, perhaps indicating to us that she takes pride and joy in her role, serving coffee?

Lewis has selected an earthy set of colours but highlighted the painting with rich shades of orangey reds further enriched by the ornate quality of her embroidered jacket and headband. In addition, these colours contrast with her black hair and necklace. The colours evoke a sense of positivity and lightheartedness, transmitting the spirit and energy of Egypt of the 19th century.



Dims: 30.4cm x 19cm;  
Frame 41 x 29.5cm  
Artist: John Frederick Lewis  
Medium: Oil on panel  
Date: 1857  
Loc.: Manchester Art Gallery



# Interior of an Italian coffee-house



Dims: 38.7 x 50.5 cm  
Artist: Thomas Patch  
Medium: Oil on canvas  
Date: 1747  
Loc.: The Fitzwilliam,  
Cambridge UK

Thomas Patch (1725–1782) lived in Rome in the mid-18th century, where sketching people in coffee houses was a central part of his subject matter. In this painting, people are gathered in a group, yet absorbed in themselves, while smoking or drinking. Their clothing suggests that they are from the bourgeoisie or peasantry. The group includes a woman and a dwarf. One individual, possibly part of the clergy, is physically far from them all. We do not know what he is thinking but, looking through his monocle, he gives us the impression of carefully inspecting the group, possibly to catch and report improper behaviour.

From its first introduction in Europe in the 16th century, coffee was, for a long time, the subject of heated debate regarding its virtue.

In Italy, part of the Catholic clergy appealed to Pope Clement VIII to ban coffee as they saw it as a product of the infidels from the Middle East. Supposedly, the Pope's response changed forever the destiny of coffee in Italy: "Why, this Satan's drink is so delicious that it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it. We shall cheat Satan by baptizing it." With the blessing of the Pope, coffee quickly became one of Italy's favourite culinary collective rituals.

The caffè soon spread across Italian cities and by the 18th century became the centres of debate and ideas. Pamphlets, newspaper and other printed matter were channelled through cafes becoming, accessible to a vast audience regardless of their social status.

# Portrait of a man, a coffee-maker



Dims: 30 x 40 cm  
Photographer: Wilfred Patrick Thesiger  
Date: September - October 1950  
Format: Film Negative 35mm  
Loc.: Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK.

This portrait of a Yazidi coffee maker by Wilfred Thesiger demonstrates the versatility of coffee as a beverage, but also how coffee is consumed across various social and cultural contexts. The journeys and explorations of Wilfred Thesiger between 1945 and 1950 across the Arabian peninsula were well documented by his own writings and photography. While Thesiger described the Yazidi men as having "distinctive and becoming garb" what we see in this photograph is the ubiquity of coffee, even in the remote desert setting of Kurdistan, Iraq. The man holds a tall metal pot with a small cup in his left hand, suggesting that the coffee is taken in small doses, quite possibly without milk. Seen in the context of the other artworks in the exhibition, we see that coffee is not just consumed in a social setting, but that it also facilitates an individual consumptive desire or need. Despite the remote setting, as Thesiger describes in his writings: "I suspect that few foreigners had ever seen as much of this country as I did during those eight months," we should not be surprised that coffee was consumed in this region: Coffee cultivation began in the Arabian peninsula and was for the next 300 years, an Arabian monopoly. In the 15th century, coffee cultivation was found in the hills of Yemen, by the 16th century it had spread to Persia, Egypt, Syria and Turkey.

Thesiger's written and visual documentation coincided with the British colonial expansion into the Arabian peninsular. Thesiger was a self-taught photographer. This photograph shows Thesiger's skills as a portraitist. As Thesiger notes in his own writing, it is the people of the region capturing his focus and attention, not the places or exploration, thus demonstrating the skills he mastered.



# Drinking-cups

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Dims: Height: 7cm (each cup), Diameter: 5cm (each rim), Weight: 720gr (inclusive of all six cups.)

Date: 1970s-1980s

Medium: pottery, Made in Yemen

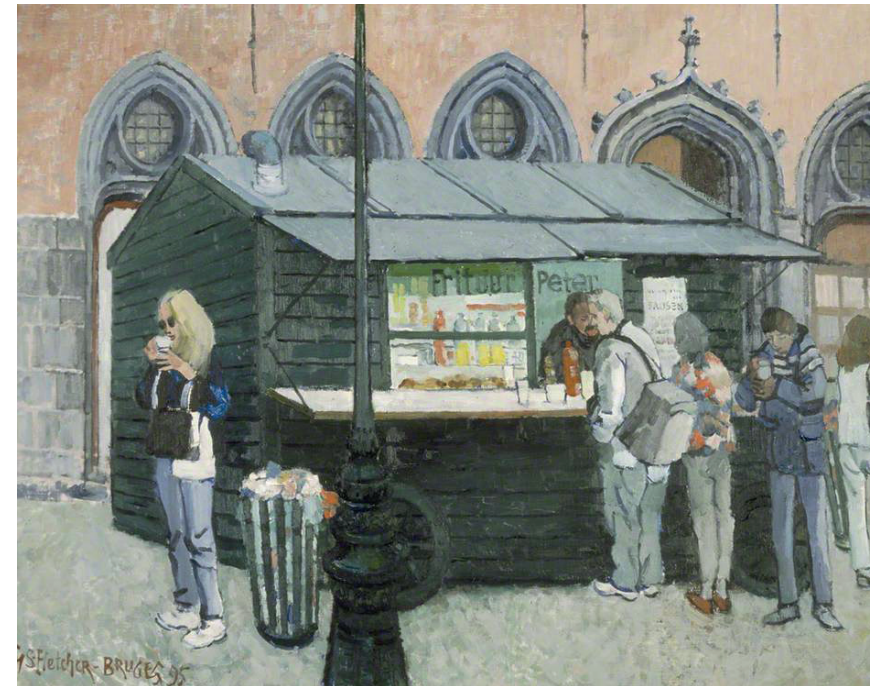
Loc.: British Museum

Yemen has been the center of coffee production since the 15th century, with 90 per cent of world's coffee traceable back to the hills of Yemen. These pottery cups thus should not be seen as a surprise if they are indeed made for coffee. Yemeni pottery is distinctive in its glaze, form and incision. The production of pottery, particularly for everyday use, such as water vessels and cooking pots have been important to the Yemeni village economies throughout the 20th century. Pottery objects of lesser importance to daily subsistence but of cultural and social

significance, such as coffee ware were also crafted throughout Yemen. Weir's survey of Yemeni villages producing pottery shows the variety of techniques and the type of specialisation across the different centres of production. Furthermore, she showed through her research that men and women were both involved in production. However, in some cases such as in Sarab, all potters were women. With Yemen coming back into the production of quality coffee perhaps we can also expect Yemeni pottery to regain popularity again.

# Coffee Stall, Bruges

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Dims: 55 x 70 cm

Artist: Geoffrey Scowcroft Fletcher

Medium: Oil on canvas

Date: 1995

Loc.: Guildhall Art Gallery

Geoffrey Sowcroft's Coffee Stall, Bruges depicts an everyday scene where coffee is a key theme to the picture. While painted in 1995, such scenes are not uncommon across Europe or elsewhere; it is also a scene that we see across so many cities today. The consumption of coffee has taken on a much different interpretation and form today than what we see from an earlier period, such as the paintings by Thomas Patch or Nicolas Lancret, seen in this exhibition and catalogue, where it is part of a social or family setting, where the individuals are bonded over the act of coffee consumption. Here in this picture, Fletcher has shown the necessity of coffee to our daily lives through the take-away phenomenon—perhaps it is the necessity of coffee or the “caffeine hit” that has facilitated the individualisation of Western cultures. The

woman in sunglasses, evoke a sense of relief of having taken the first sip of the coffee, calming the nerves and tension.

Whatever, our interpretation, Fletcher has masterfully shown the street scene in Bruges. His belief that the best representation of street scenes is to be front of it, is reflected in this painting. Trained in London at the Slade School of Art with Sir Robert Albert Richardson, an architect at the Bartlett School, we see his attention to the windows and arches in the background of what might be that of a church. Tutelage under Richardson, also helped Fletcher develop his perspective which he was able to quickly sketch and complete out on the bustling streets, which is evident in this painting.



# Girl at Table



The Girl at Table (1980) evokes a sense of thoughtfulness and loneliness. William Wallace paints the girl sitting by herself at the table, accompanied by her paper, coffeepot and the painting behind her.

The painting invites the observer to enquire if she is satisfied sitting alone. But with the coffeepot as a supporting element, we wonder whether the act of drinking coffee can be a contemplative exercise. Behind the girl, there is a curious picture of a man, also alone. We thus make an unavoidable connection between the two of them. In a way, they complete each other, simultaneously instigating questions of their relationship.

It is curious that the coffee maker on the table is similar to a Moka Pot, a traditional Italian model coffee maker that is considered a design piece today. Invented in 1933, the Moka Pot marked a historical shift in Italy, where the espresso as a drink consumed outside of the home, began to be appreciated in a domestic setting. It is worth drawing a connection between Wallace's painting and the Breakfast Bouquet by Julianne Schloss, where the shape of the pot is reflected in Scholoss' work, drawing a parallel in the ubiquity of the domestic coffee pot since the 1930s onwards.

Dims: 124 x 122 cm  
Artist: William Wallace  
Medium: Oil on canvas  
Date: 1980  
Loc.: University of Dundee, Duncan of  
Jordanstone College Collection

# Breakfast Bouquet

Julianne Scholss' unusual, yet structured sculpture, Breakfast Bouquet (2010) deconstructs the idea that a bouquet needs to be made of flowers. The coffeepot supports overlapping silver mugs on top.

Perhaps the most contemporary and unexpected of all the works in the exhibition, Breakfast Bouquet invites the visitor to think beyond the social and cultural elements of coffee, rather the different elements of coffee, whether it is the coffee ware or the raw ingredient, perhaps all should be seen for its artistic element. The utilisation of the coffeepot as Schloss' central object and focus, suggests that everyday objects can be equally inspirational and also facilitate conversation, as coffee does. Scholss' work presents a counterpoint to William Wallace's painting, Girl at Table, where there is a coffeepot but no coffee cup. Moreover, the two works form a dialogue with one another, from the sparse setting of Wallace's work to the random and fulsome nature of Schloss' work.

Julianne Scholss is a 40-year-old German designer. She trained as silversmith, at the State Vocational School for Glass and jewellery in Kaufbeuren-Neugablonz, studied French, literature and art history at Regensburg University and in 2010 finished a Master's degree in silversmithing. Since then she has her own workshop in the city of Nuremberg.



Dims: H 30 cm Overall height, W 24.5 cm Overall width,  
Depth: 25.7 cm Overall depth, H 13.8 cm of coffee pot,  
W 13 cm of coffee pot with lid closed, W 18.5 cm of  
coffee pot with lid open  
Diameter: 9.2 cm of coffee pot  
Artist: Julianne Schloss (designer and maker)  
Medium: Stainless steel coffee pot supporting a  
cornucopia made of sheet silver.  
Date: 2010  
Loc.: V&A



# Friends Drinking Coffee |

## Frank Auerbach and Lucian Freud



Two of Britain’s most famous and celebrated artists, Frank Auerbach and Lucian Freud, together deep in thought and conversation with a third party, who is unseen and possibly the painter of the work? It seems surprising that we do not know who the artist is, particularly when The Guardian reported about their friendship with a photograph of the two in the same setting in 2002. The friendship between the two is clear in this painting but as Brown reports, their relationship was long standing, humorous and thoughtful, with a yearly exchange of birthday cards and correspondences.

This painting shows us how at ease the two are with each other. The symmetry in their bodily language and actions: Auerbach’s right hand raised with cup and Freud’s left raised

both in mid-motion with cup to their lips demonstrates their ease and synchronicity. Their foreheads, eyes and cup creates a triangle in which the viewer is directed to focus on their faces. We move from their faces to their hands and the artist’s attention to their hands reveals much about the two. Freud’s sinewy hands unmask his age. The possibility of coffee facilitating social interactions and conversation and friendship may also transport us to another moment. Friends Drinking Coffee provides a window into the friendship of Britain’s two most celebrated artists. Simultaneously, we are drawn into the individual world of Auerbach and Freud to ponder their individual state of mind at the moment of the painting.

Dims: 134 x 291 cm  
Artist: Unknown  
Medium: Oil on canvas  
Date: Unknown  
Loc.: Hautlieu School, Jersey

# Caffè Greco



Dims: 186 x 243 cm  
Artist: Renato Guttuso  
Medium: Acrylic on lined cardboard  
Date: 1976  
Loc.: Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

There are two important versions as well as different preparatory studies of Guttuso’s (1911–1987) Caffè Greco. The first version is the sketch you can see in this exhibition, a loan from the Collection of Thyssen Bornemisza in Madrid. The second, bigger in size is in Cologne, Museum Ludwig.

In this huge cartoon, Renato Guttuso is portraying one of Rome’s best-known cafés, famous for having hosted the best of Roman society. This caffè quickly became renown for being a melting pot of Italian and international artists as well as works of art. From its opening in 1760, Caffè Greco hosted Casanova, famous Italian writers like Leopardi, D’Annunzio and Moravia, as well as English poets, such as Byron, Shelley and Keats travelling through on their grand tour of Europe. As Guttuso explains in a 1976 article, de Chirico was the initial seed

for this painting. De Chirico, father of metaphysical painting, stated “Caffè Greco is the only place one can wait the end of the World.”

In this group portrait Guttuso portrays the dynamism of the café, the swirling of ideas in the different conversations. The artist’s assemblage of people is not real, but rather anachronistic and idealistic: artists of different times, people from different places form together an allegoric gathering, all sources of Guttuso’s inspiration and art making. This work of art perfectly foregrounds the idea that cafes and coffee bring people of all cultures together as well as a place to share, create and formulate new ideas. Coffee facilitates the meeting with and of other people and thus gives birth to new ideas. The public space, instead of the intimacy of the artist’s studio is feeding the artist.

# Commissioned Work

by Adi Toch

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Today, as in the past, people require a catalyst for their ideas, to collectively gather, think and share. The café enables people to make themselves visible or hide among the multitude. The Estorick Collection, in collaboration with Adi Toch brings the café and the act of drinking coffee as culminating point of the exhibition.

“Vessels and containers are an innate method of communication. They convey a story of gathering, holding, storing – not only do they surround us in our daily lives, they shape our perception of the division between inside and out, the notion of moving from one framed space into another.”

The series of site-specific participatory creations from Adi Toch will explore how

different objects, cups, big or small, cold, hot, smelly, broken, new and old, the presence or absence of objects like newspaper, sound and silence will influence the experience of communication. Conversation, or its absence will take the shape of the containers. Sitting around different tables, interacting with all our senses, when will we continue or stop the flow of conversation. Will the conversation last for the duration of a cup of coffee? Will it be interrupted? Or will the conversation be extended?

A recent graduate from The Class, London in 2009 with a Masters in Art, Design & Visual Culture, her work is projected towards storytelling: “My work communicates through its sensory qualities and invites the observer to pick it up or look closely before revealing its story.”

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Cheuk Rose  
Hsu Jennifer  
Lima Carolina  
Liang Yudan  
Omodeo Zorini Irene

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