

Solomon J Solomon RA

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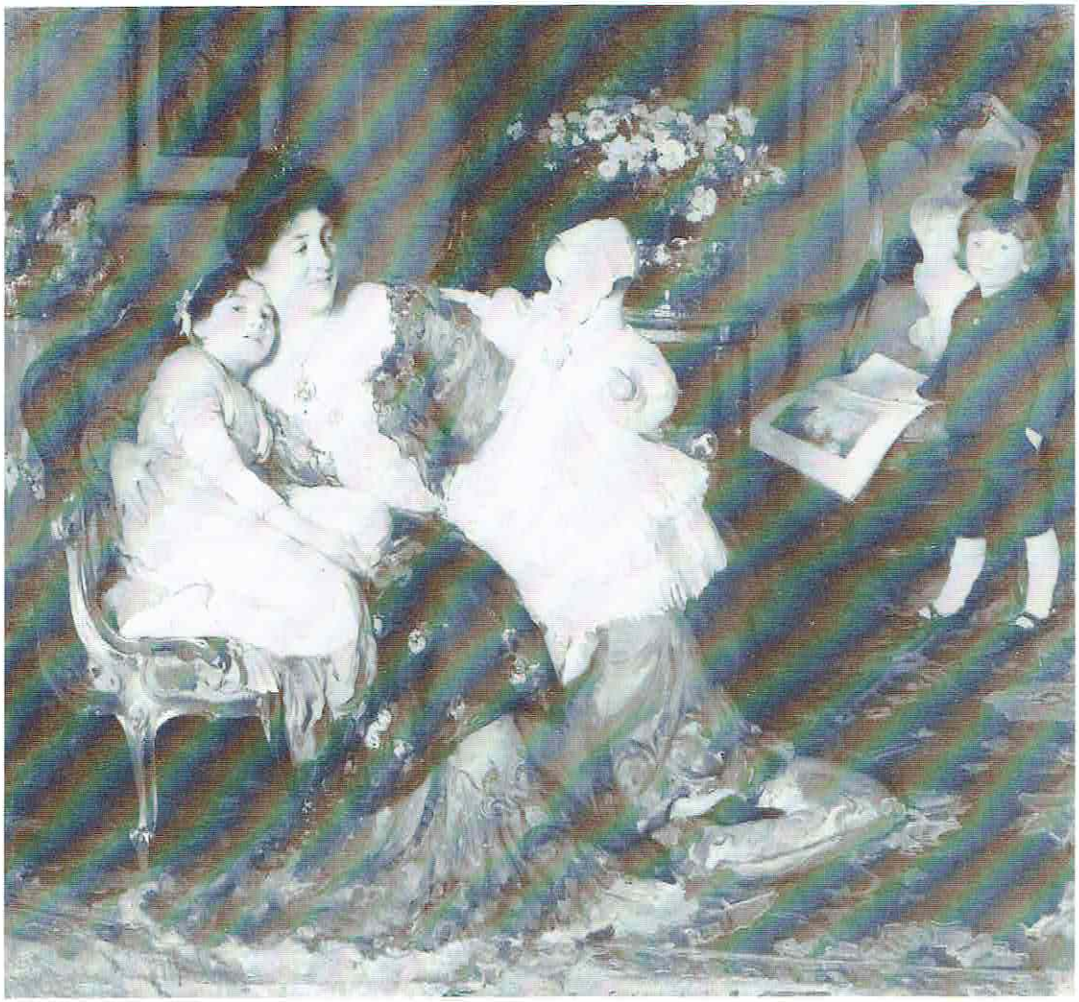


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Solomon J Solomon RA

28 October – 18 November 1990

BEN URI ART GALLERY

Preface

This major exhibition of the work of Solomon J Solomon RA fulfils a long-cherished personal ambition since, as the second Jewish Royal Academician (the first was Solomon Alexander Hart (1806–1881), Solomon takes a leading place in the galaxy of Anglo-Jewish artists. Moreover, he was undoubtedly the most prominent practising artist in the long and distinguished list of Presidents of this Society.

Solomon's family is the focus of this exhibition. We are particularly indebted to his daughters, Iris (the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu) and Mary (Mrs Ronald Rubinstein), and to many other members of his family for their enthusiasm, kindness and goodwill without which it would have been impossible to mount this exhibition. We also extend our gratitude to the many individuals, galleries and institutions who have willingly lent us works for the exhibition. These loans are all acknowledged individually in the catalogue.

It is a matter of great regret that we have been unable to show certain important pictures by Solomon J Solomon. Some were too large to be accommodated in our gallery and others could not be made available because their condition was too fragile to risk removal and transport. However, even if not on display at this exhibition, most of these pictures are included in the List of Works in the catalogue. Solomon J Solomon was a prolific artist and the preparation of the present list of his works has involved much research and some detective work. Undoubtedly, the existence and location of other works will be revealed in time, possibly as a result of this exhibition. In due course it is hoped to publish a more complete list of this output.

Jenny Pery has been responsible for the planning and preparation of this exhibition and for the essay on Solomon J Solomon in the catalogue. We are most indebted to her for all the hard work, expertise and enthusiasm she has displayed in her task. We are also grateful to Zena Flax who designed this catalogue and saw it through the press. And we should also thank our own staff in the gallery, Julia Weiner, our Curator/Administrator, Maggie Pope, her predecessor, Katie Verrion and Marian Stern, gallery assistants, for all their devoted help and interest.

This year the Ben Uri Art Society celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary. It is a voluntary body with charitable status and over the years has depended upon its patrons, members and friends for support. Despite constant financial stringency – and that is a euphemism – 'living from pillar to post' might be a more accurate description – it has achieved much in the way of exhibitions, concerts, lectures and a host of other activities. The Society has also assembled an important collection of works of art by Jewish artists, two of which are on show in this exhibition. The sparse resources of the Society have often been strained by the need to spend considerable sums of money on the restoration of its pictures. One of the pictures exhibited here, 'The Field', has only recently been extensively restored at great cost and we are most grateful to members of the Solomon family and, especially, to the J S Cohen Foundation for sponsoring this essential work. There are many other works in the collection awaiting restoration and this will be undertaken as soon as funds are available.

This exhibition has been sponsored by Christie's and for this we are deeply indebted to the Hon Charles Allsopp, Chairman of Christie's, Noel Annesley, Deputy Chairman and their fellow directors. Not only have Christie's given us generous financial support, but they have provided us most willingly with all the expertise and advice we have sought. We have been delighted by their cheerful willingness to help us in every way and we owe them a great debt of gratitude. We are also most grateful to our President Alexander Margulies who, as usual, has provided us with financial support and to all the others who have helped us in this way.

A lot of work has gone into this exhibition and my personal thanks are due to Liesel, my wife, to my fellow-officers of the Society, and to all those who have patiently suffered my cajoling, demanding and persistence over many months. I hope that the time and effort has been well-spent.

Walter Schwab

Front cover
Self-portrait c 1896
Catalogue No 6
Reproduced by kind permission of the David Messum Gallery, London W1

Back cover
Mrs Patrick Campbell as Paula Tanqueray 1894
oil on canvas
The Arts Club, London
Reproduced by kind permission of the Arts Club, London

Title page
A Family Group: The Artist's Wife and Children: Papa Painting 1905 oil on canvas
Tate Gallery, London
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Foreword

by Sir Hugh Casson CH, KCVO, PPRA, FRIBA

The successful painters of the 1890's were better known perhaps for their comfortable life-style than for their work. Butlers and broughams waited upon them. Soirées, dinner parties, receptions filled their evenings. But it would be a mistake to dismiss them as 'flanêurs'. They were deeply serious about their work, stood daily and all day at their easels, taught unpaid and regularly at the RA Schools, spent much time travelling Europe and the Middle East in uncomfortable conditions, sketching and painting so long as the light held. They supported charities and joined the Volunteers. Fewer side interests, some would say, might have meant more imaginative painting. Perhaps, but perhaps not. They were, like all of us are, prisoners of their period which means they concentrated on facts and truth to nature rather than their imagination. French Impressionism did not impress most of them – English Impressionism had died long ago with Turner and Constable – but the Victorian Art World was not as flat as it looked. The iron grip of the RA was loosening. Photography and illustration were beginning to take speaking parts. Experiment was in the air.

Solomon J Solomon – the subject of this sympathetic and perceptive study, though less famous than many of his RA colleagues, was an archetype of this period. He believed in meticulous and intelligent craftsmanship, clear objectives and hard work. His historical and biblical compositions were vigorously researched. He relaxed only in his portraiture particularly of his happy family. He was technically inventive – proving to be a courageous and skilful camouflage officer during the First World War – popular and friendly. But it has to be said that he stuck all his life to what he knew. He tried to do it well, but (to quote André Gide in another context) he stuck to the centre of the cage and did not press against the bars.

Jenny Pery has clearly enjoyed researching the life and work of this obviously engaging and happy artist, and she succeeds in conveying her enjoyment to her readers.

Hugh Casson 1990

Solomon J Solomon RA

The name of Solomon J Solomon – memorably sonorous though it is – is not well-known today. For a painter of considerable stature in his time this sinking from the public eye is surprising. But perhaps it is not so surprising when one considers the times in which he was painting, and the history of British art during this century. Solomon's career took root during the old order, and the huge social and economic changes which took place in Britain up to and through the First World War altered the face of British art. Solomon's pictures began to wear modern dress, but in his methods of constructing paintings he remained faithful to older models. After more than sixty years since his death we tend to be less sensitive to the anachronisms of his art, and what we see now is a quantity of extremely good painting, and how well his methods of painting served him.

From an art-historical point of view Solomon represents a last efflorescence of the old European academic tradition, based on Hellenic cultural models, which had persisted for five hundred years. The representation of Nature was considered to be the artist's important task, and the most important phenomenon of Nature was the human form. The human form was always Solomon's main motif, and he worked hard at achieving the most actual and telling portrayal of his subjects. Specialising in painting people, he was almost inevitably taken up with portraiture, because of the pressure of demand and its steady profitability. Unfortunately interest in portrait paintings tends to fade with time – the paintings, being personal, are of limited interest to others; they disappear into private drawing rooms, board rooms and halls; and often the conditions and demands of the sitter dilute the intentions of the painter. Solomon's portraits, however, deserve to be looked at again. They are always skilfully and solidly constructed, and at their best they are searchingly and generously painted, showing an affectionate grasp of the sitter's personality. Solomon shows less inclination to mould the sitter to the fashionable ideal than was customary at the time, his work contains less mannerism, less fuss. This lack of fuss was typical of the man.

Like the Renaissance painters he admired, Solomon was something of a Renaissance man. Extremely widely read, he sang well, he rode well, he was a gifted administrator, in demand as a leader of various societies. Agreeable and amusing, he was widely welcome in London society. He became a prominent figure in Anglo-Jewry, and was only the second Jew to be elected as a member of the Royal Academy. He involved himself in many charitable concerns, and was a dedicated teacher at the Academy Schools. Finally, his work in camouflage during the First World War was of the utmost importance – an importance which has perhaps never been fully recognised. What was the background to this unusual man?

Solomon Solomon, as he began life, was the fourth son of Joseph Solomon, who worked initially as an apprentice in a leather factory in Bermondsey. As a young man on business in Vienna, Solomon senior met and married the eighteen-year-old Helena Lichtenstadt, who came from a cultured family and was musically and artistically gifted. Solomon junior was born in South London on 16 September 1860. He was nicknamed 'Toddy' by his siblings, a nickname which stuck throughout his life. He attended the South London school in Great Dover Street kept by Thomas Whitford, and was taught Hebrew and German by the Rev Simeon Singer, whose portrait he later painted. He sang in the choir of Singer's Borough Synagogue, and throughout his life he had an attractive light tenor voice. Music and art were very much a part of family activity, and he showed early ability in both. Although his mother encouraged his artistic predilections, his father was less happy, and sought the advice of neighbour John Cohen, who suggested 'better let him be a painter, because the singing will go, whilst the art will remain'. For religious, social and economic reasons it was unusual for a Jew to become a painter in those days, but the way was made easier by the increasing anglicisation of the large Jewish families and the eminently desirable respectability of leading British painters such as Lord Leighton and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Within the Jewish community Solomon Hart had broken new ground by becoming, in 1840, the first Jewish Royal Academician and later the Academy's librarian.

In 1876, therefore, Solomon entered Heatherley's Art School in Newman Street, where amongst his contemporaries were John Lavery, Harry Paget and the much older Samuel Butler, author of 'Erewhon' and 'The Way of All Flesh'. Solomon remembered 'in those days I was a boy of sixteen making highly stippled drawings from dusty casts placed around the studio. The students, mostly middle-aged, painted from the living model in the adjoining room – entirely curtained off from ours. Occasionally I would peep into this holy of holies, and generally Sam Butler with his bushy eyebrows was holding forth – much to the merriment of the others. There was also the very thin Miss Parnell – sister of the patriot, who argued about Home Rule, with a Captain Hall, presumably an Irishman. Few

people in the seventies knew what Home Rule meant . . .'[1]

Heatherley himself taught his thirty-odd students very little, and only occasionally made an appearance to call out 'Would you Gentlemen kindly desist from braying'. Presumably, however, Solomon accumulated enough good work in his year there to convince the Royal Academy Schools of his potential, and these he entered as a student in 1877. Leighton was President, Millais and Alma-Tadema, at the height of their fame, were teaching there, while conducting their lives with the panache born of commercial success. (At a time when the average working wage was £100 a year and taxation fixed at 5%, Millais in a good year could make between £25,000 and £40,000). These Olympians were role models for the students, amongst whom were La Thangue, Stanhope Forbes and Arthur Hacker, with whom Solomon formed a lifelong friendship.

The somewhat deadening effect of the Academy Schools, with its emphasis on slavish imitation of the antique, prompted Solomon and many of his contemporaries to look to Paris, where the teaching included drawing and painting from living models. The following year Solomon entered the École de Beaux Arts, where he studied under Cabanel, a gentle and sympathetic teacher. Cabanel's teaching had a lasting influence on him, and instilled in him a practical attitude to the craft of painting which suited his no-nonsense temperament. His time in Paris was a happy one, with his busy social life enriched by the friendship of Prince Lucien Buonaparte, whose portrait he painted. Solomon wished to broaden his artistic education further by going on to the Academy at Munich, but he found the atmosphere there did not suit him and he stayed only three months. After lengthy travels in Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain and Morocco in the company of Arthur Hacker, he returned for a further nine months to Paris to work in Cabanel's studio.

Solomon obviously had ambitions to make a name for himself amongst English painters, and it was therefore inevitable that he should seek to do so in the Royal Academy. There was little alternative in London at the time. Durand-Ruel's gallery at 168 New Bond Street, which opened in 1870, had not been a success, and the Academy, patronised by the majority of British art collectors, continued to behave as if the Impressionist revolution in France had never happened. It was not until long after Queen Victoria's death that the old order began to change, and not until Roger Fry brought the Post-impressionist painters to London in 1910 that new artistic ideas were forced upon the public's attention. Despite the fact that Solomon was in Paris during the late '70s and early '80s, Impressionism seems to have affected him little. Like most of his English contemporaries, he knew very little about it. He certainly painted occasionally with an impressionistic technique (and indeed showed technical skill in many different methods of painting), but he seems to have regarded this 'alla prima' sort of painting only as suitable for a sketch, potentially useful for more worked-up paintings. He tended to paint landscapes and *plein-air* subjects 'for fun', regarding the paintings composed in the studio as the serious work. For him the Royal Academy was the place to show his work. In 1881 he exhibited his first painting there, and continued to show there with such regularity over the next forty years that the space reserved for his work became known as 'Solomon's Corner'.

It seemed the Royal Academy would never change. It embodied the official taste of the nation, and it was this taste that Solomon seemed eager to serve. Although he was a founder member and early exhibitor at the New English Art Club in 1886, the club's growing rebellion against the Academy, led by Whistler, Steer and Sickert, may have alienated him and he appears to have stopped exhibiting with them. Certainly he remained suspicious throughout his life of artistic experiments such as Whistler's 'Falling Rocket' so famously damned by Ruskin, and considered them as technical fireworks designed, as he told his children, to *épater les bourgeois*.

By 1887 Solomon's career was well enough established to allow him to move to a new studio at 18 Holland Park Road, with George Watts, Val Prinsep and Sir Frederic Leighton as neighbours. It was here that he painted his large 'Samson', probably the best-known of his paintings, an epic display of struggling manhood and vicious womanhood. The group of intertwined men, reminiscent of the Laöcoon, is pulled in all directions, and the pointing arm of Delilah leads in the observer's eyes to focus on the head and shoulders of Samson. The figures are surrounded by a mass of agitated drapery which accentuates the impression of movement, a device Solomon used in many other paintings. Strong directional movements break up the picture plane, receding into the background and bursting into the foreground. There are echoes of Rubens' 'Rape of the Sabine Women', but the space in Solomon's picture is shallow like that of a stage set, emphasising the theatricality of the work. The painting caused a considerable stir when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy, attracting a mention

in many of the exhibition reviews, and was immediately bought by a Mr James Harrison and presented as a Jubilee gift to the young Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.

Solomon probably picked his subject, of which Leighton had already painted a version, chiefly to display his ability to paint the human form, which he did with considerable realism and gusto. The picture was seen as innovative at the time, and Solomon was thought of as a promising young painter hot from the forge of Paris. Contempory reviewers were divided on the success of the painting and the genuineness of the human passion depicted, but at least one saw it as a work which might freshen the stale endeavours at the Academy. "When knowledge and zeal go hand-in-hand with daring as in Mr Solomon's 'Samson', perhaps the most ambitious picture of the year, it is impossible to feel that the Academy has not gained greatly . . . experimental in a sense such works may be, but experiment, even when carried out with less than half the power and conviction of Mr Solomon, is something better than stagnation, and altogether the best presage of renewed health in the body artistic that just now could be desired".[2]

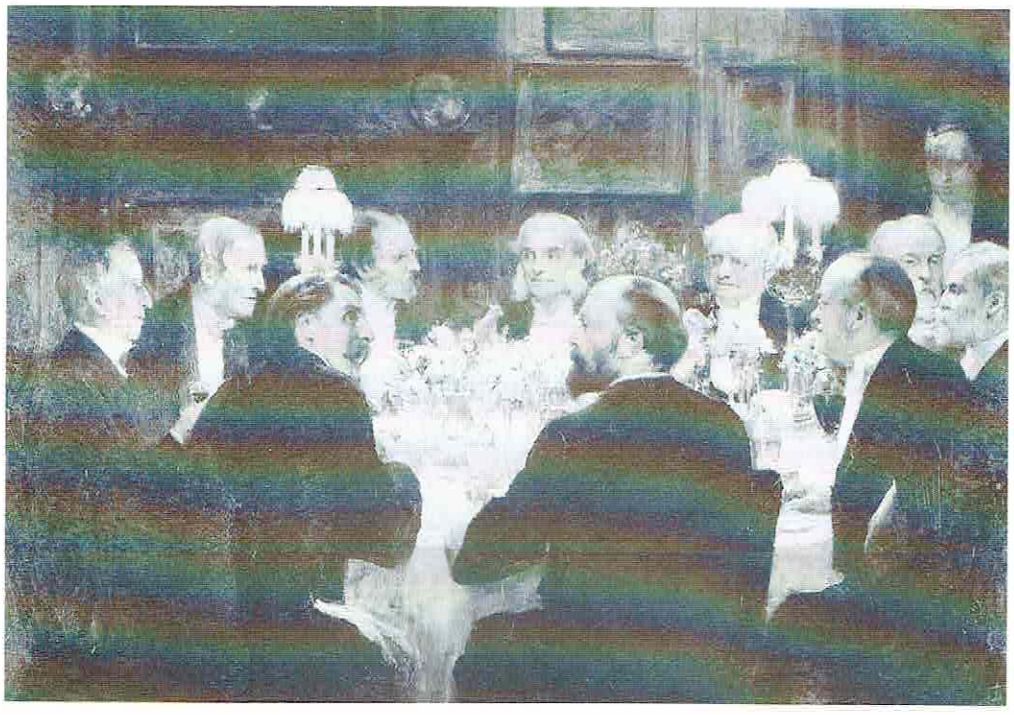
Samson is still, despite its contorted staginess, a remarkable piece of painting which draws fascinated gazes from visitors to the Walker Art Gallery. In 1957 the then director, Hugh Scrutton, featured it in an exhibition of his own choice. He included it 'partly because of the vigour and technical skill shown in the painting of the fighting men, but also to draw attention to another side of the collection – the Victorian popular masterpieces'. The painting was reproduced in the London Illustrated News with the caption 'Delilah has dated. But the group of fighting men, over life-size in the original, is a very fine piece of nude painting, which will stand comparison with the great Italian baroque painters, though the more cultured – offended by the picture's popularity – resist admitting this'.[3] The model for Samson was Solomon's younger brother Philip (who frequently modelled other characters including Hercules and even Venus), and Delilah was composed of the head of Thérèse Abdullah, the Indian daughter of Sir Albert Sassoon's cook, and the body of an Italian girl called Madeleine Fionda.

Solomon's star was ascending. While working on 'Samson' he was visited in his studio by Millais, whom he later recalled as having been very kind. His social life was energetic and he was much in demand at dinner parties, including the Octave Dinners given by Sir Henry Thompson, a distinguished urologist prominent in London social circles. The Octaves were held at Sir Henry's house in Wimpole Street, and eight courses accompanied by eight wines were served at eight o'clock to eight guests in addition to the host and the guest of honour. The dinners were attended by distinguished medical men, and also representatives of art, literature and politics, with Royalty occasionally present. The meal was served at a round or oval table to encourage 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul'. Solomon moved into contemporary mode in a painting of the dinner at which Mr Ernest Hart, then editor of the British Medical Journal and recently returned from a successful lecture tour of the United States of America, welcomed the Medical Historical Society. The picture presents an effective solution to the problem of combining eleven individual portraits (the eleventh being Sir Henry's butler Newman). Solomon links them in an oval of lamplight, throwing some heads into silhouette against the light and lighting some against the dark background. He explores the painterly possibilities of a central light source within the canvas, and the intimacy implied by the artificial light is reinforced by the close pattern of heads and the direction of their glances.

In a picture painted four years earlier, Solomon had explored a similar theme of strongly contrasted lights and darks around a table. This is 'Your Health', a dramatic multiple portrait of persons from all the arts assembled to drink the health of the same Ernest Hart. The story goes that Alfred Mond, later Lord Melchett, fell in love with the pretty face of Miss Violet Goetz, seated next to Dr Hart, when he saw the painting in Solomon's studio. He asked for an introduction and eventually married her. Solomon painted her later with two of her children.

Solomon's interest in dramatic tonal arrangements can be seen as early as 1884 in the 'Conversation Piece' from Leighton House, in which the light dresses are nicely balanced against the dark bulk of the furniture, although the lighting from the left front is less adventurous than in 'Your Health' or the 'Octave'. The interior, displayed like a well-caparisoned stage set, shows a typical late Victorian upper middle class soirée, with potted palms (then considered 'arty') and a mass of ornamentation.

The focal point of the artist's year in the late 1880s was the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, popular in appeal and bringing in huge numbers of visitors. The exhibition was then held in May as an integral part of the London season, and top hats and morning dress were required apparel at the Private Views (this



An Octave for Mr Ernest Hart
1894 oil on canvas
Wellcome Historical Medical Museum
The sitters are, from left to right: Sir Richard Quain, Bt, Sir James Paget, Bt, Mr (Sir) Victor Horsley, Mr (Sir) Henry Thompson, Mr Ernest Hart, Dr (Sir) George Anderson Critchett, Sir Thomas Spencer Wells, Sir William Henry Broadbent, Bt, Mr (Sir) Joseph Fayrer, Dr (Sir) Thomas Lauder Brunton.
The butler was Mr Newman
Reproduced by kind permission of the Wellcome Institute Library, London

practice was not abandoned until 1940). The ladies' hats were an important feature of the Private Views, and those of Lady Alexander, wife of the well-known actor-manager, sporting enormous structures laden with birds and flowers, were justifiably famous. Before the Academy Private Views the artists held Show Sundays in their studios, for which invitations were issued and elaborate refreshments prepared. These Show Sundays were important opportunities for the artist to present his work in his own milieu, and Solomon's Sundays were much frequented. On one occasion his characteristic generosity caused him to lend his Holland Park Studio to Stanhope Forbes, who had come up from Cornwall to show a large painting which turned out to be too big for his own studio. Stanhope Forbes and Sargent were the stars of the Academy exhibitions and few painters could match their popularity. But Solomon had his own following, and a rising number of portrait commissions.

His position as one of Britain's leading portrait painters was strengthened when in 1891 he became a founder member of the newly formed Society of Portrait Painters, with Stuart Wortley, the Hon John Collier, Jacomb Hood, J J Shannon, H Vos and Arthur Hacker as co-members. In the same year, Solomon was approached by the barrister Herman Cohen to become the first president of the Maccabeans, a social society of Jewish professional men with charitable aims. In his notes the lawyer describes the election: 'Solomon J Solomon, by his reputation in his art, his loyalty to his race, his popularity and his youth, was the very man'.[4] Aged thirty-one, he successfully presided over this remarkable band of Anglo-Jewish intellectuals for four years, taking up the post again after the First World War. In 1896 he was elected an Associate Member of the Royal Academy.

How far did Solomon's increasing prominence in London Anglo-Jewish society affect his artistic endeavour? He seems to have wished to use his artistic and social gifts to help disperse the kind of institutional anti-semitism prevalent at the time. The desire to overcome or to lubricate any social or religious difficulties may have encouraged him to throw in his lot so wholeheartedly with the Royal Academy. His subject matter was an acceptable mixture of classical and biblical motifs mixed with numerous portraits. He was not drawn, as Rothenstein was, to Jewish subjects, but painted both Jewish and non-Jewish men and women, of increasing prestige. He received commissions to paint several members of the Royal Family, including Queen Victoria, who unfortunately died before the portrait could be effected – the existing sketch commissioned by The Sphere was painted posthumously from photographs. In 1897 he was invited to paint one of the large panels that decorate the walls of the Royal Exchange, where his work stands with that of well-known contemporary English painters such as Leighton, Stanhope Forbes and Brangwyn. He had become a figure in English artistic life, and the variations in his style appear to reflect the requirements of his public rather than a wish to experiment with different forms and techniques.

Solomon seems to have performed an artistic and ideological balancing act. His attitude to his religion is nowhere overtly expressed, but as a good Jew in a Christian society he probably experienced some incompatibilities and, always the conciliator, he seems to have wished for a reconciliation of opposing views. His painting of 1904, 'An Allegory', is an ambiguous work. Moses, bearing a tablet of stone, leans over the recumbent figure of Christ, who is borne aloft by two matronly angels and a group of cherubs. Figures above

await their upward arrival, while naked figures are left lying below. Solomon apparently intended this picture to represent Christianity's debt to Judaism. The sketch of 'Christ in Glory' may be an exploratory study for this picture. He was evidently deliberating on religious problems, as he was on reconciling the classical traditions of his art with the Hebraic traditions of his religion. In a paper he read to the Maccabeans entitled 'Art and Judaism' he states: 'How far he can assimilate what is best of Hellenic influence without prejudice to his individuality is clearly one of the chief problems that beset the modern Jew'. He continues with what is effectively a declaration of his own artistic faith. 'We know that the reproduction of natural forms, more particularly the human form, was forbidden to the Jews. Art in such conditions could not flourish. All design is based on natural form and the key to the highest inspiration and appreciation of art is the knowledge of the human form'.[5]

In 1897 Solomon married Ella Montagu, the eldest daughter of Hyman Montagu, a solicitor and numismatist. Among the many friends at their wedding were Alma-Tadema and Jerome K Jerome, author of 'Three Men in a Boat', of whom he painted a lively portrait. The Solomons honeymooned on the Thames and spent the summer in an etcher-friend's cottage near Wallingford. In the autumn they returned to London to live at 12 Marlborough Place, St John's Wood, where the eldest of their three children, Mary, was born. Solomon, now known as Solomon Joseph (or J) Solomon to distinguish him from his disreputable namesake Simeon Solomon, settled enthusiastically into family life. He rode every morning in Hyde Park, worked in the studio until it was time to lunch with his family, worked again in the studio until the light went, and entertained a good deal. His large family circle, now further enlarged by that of his wife, ensured a lively and increasingly prominent social life. Soon a studio within the house became desirable, and the Solomons moved to 60 Finchley Road, where his son Dorian and daughter Iris were born. Yet another move took the family to 18 Hyde Park Gate, where his brother-in-law Delissa Joseph designed a large studio for him at the back of the house. This studio frequently doubled as a room for parties, and Mary had her Coming Out dance in it.



Jerome K Jerome 1889
Catalogue No 5

Solomon, now very much a family man, was an indefatigable painter of his own family, and his children appear in paintings from babyhood onwards. They often served as models, and Mary especially posed for him many times, often modelling the fashionable evening dresses of the time. She still remembers the discomfort of those rigid boned bodices. Once or twice she fainted and her father brought her round with sips of whisky or brandy. The studio, full of a fine collection of props and materials as well as books of pictures, was always open to the children when there were no sitters present. The children would watch him working on his paintings, from the initial compositional 'doodles' on boards he had specially designed for him, to oil sketches and large canvases underpainted in grisaille and overlaid with colour in scumbles and glazes. Their mother acted as 'painter's boy' and laid out the colours each morning in a particular pattern, and in the evening washed his brushes in turpentine and soft soap. Her hands were often rough in consequence. She enjoyed these duties, but found the constant entertaining, with sitters often staying to lunch, more burdensome, and she frequently admonished her daughters never to marry a man who stays in to lunch.

With a family in London Solomon was growing restless, complaining that 'in summer it's awkward to get sitters and in winter the light is so bad'. At the instigation of his family he bought a bungalow at Birchington in Kent, and had a studio built into the cliffs there. The family often remained there when he

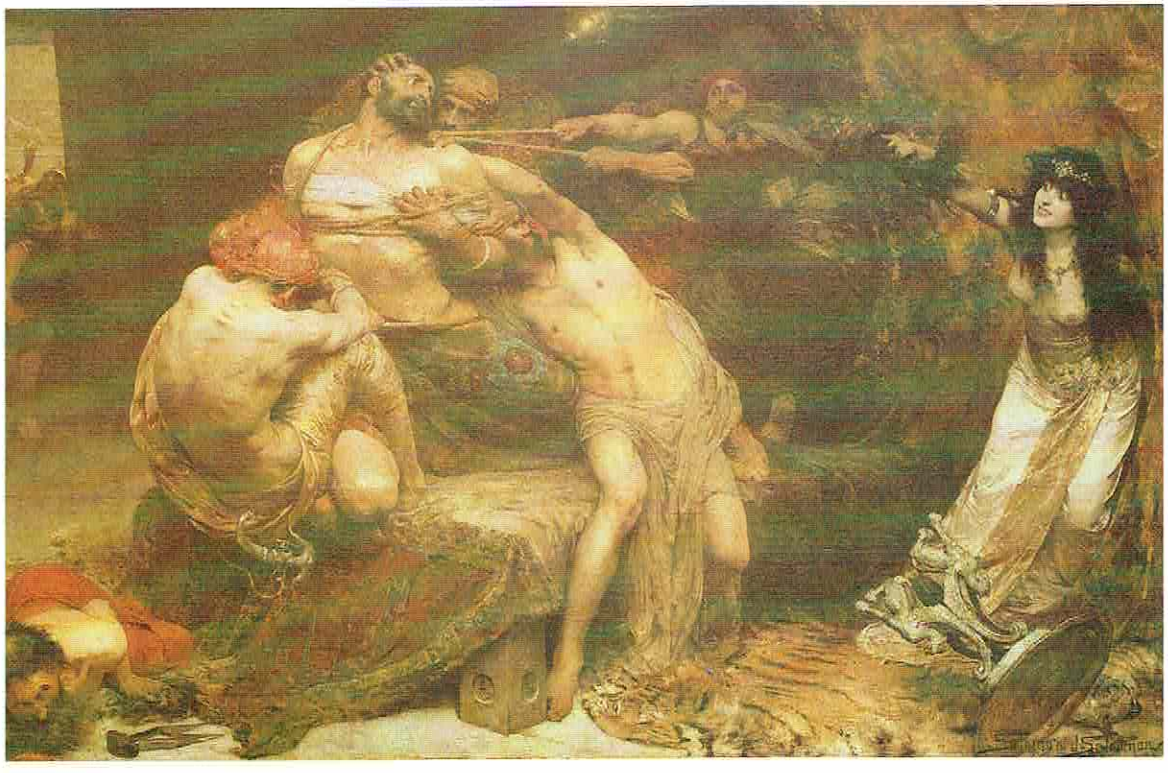


Self-portrait aged 17 1877
Catalogue No 1



Right
Conversation Piece 1884
Catalogue No 3

Below
Samson 1887 oil on canvas
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
Reproduced by kind permission of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool





St George 1906 oil on canvas
Royal Academy Diploma collection
Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Academy of Arts, London

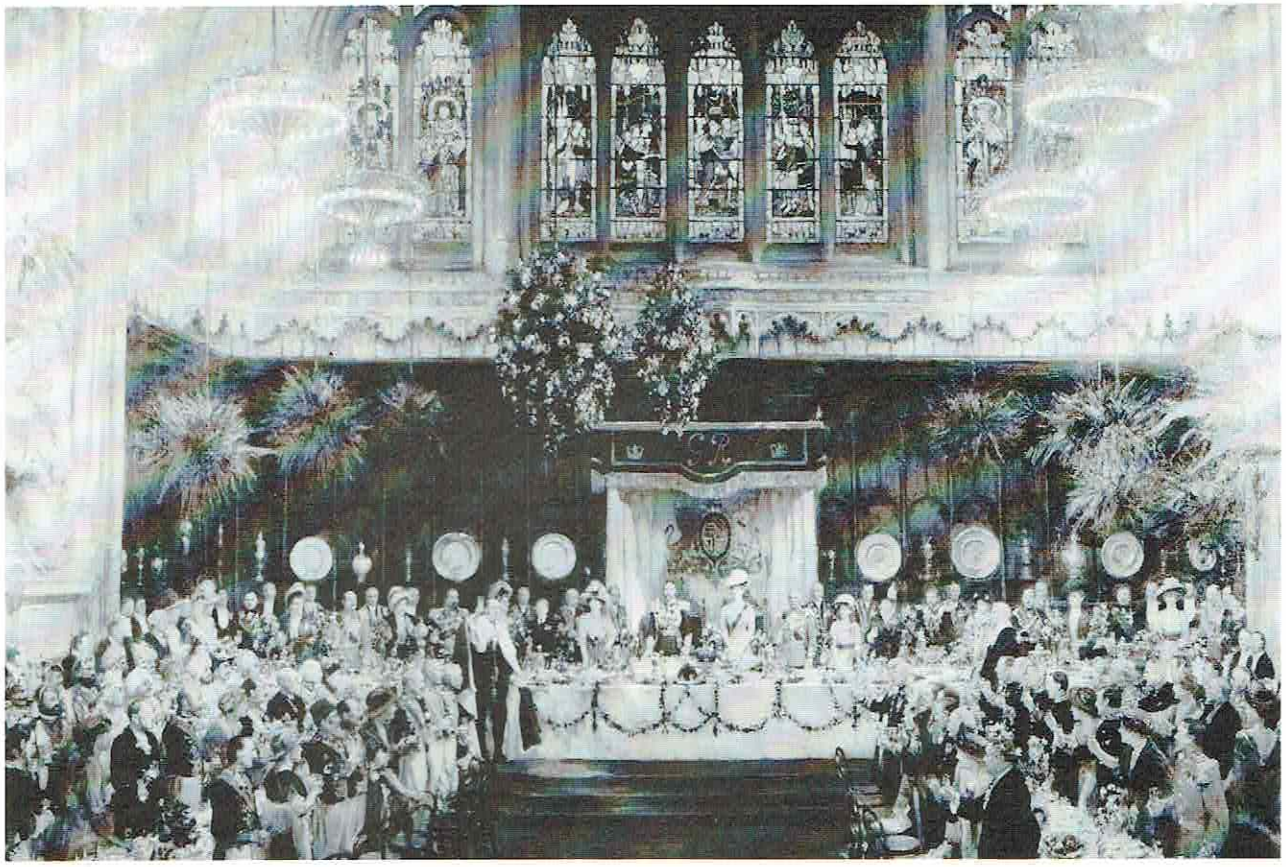
had to be in London, but he loved to be there when he could, and ride with the children along the beaches. Many of his less formal and more sensitive paintings such as 'The Breakfast Table' and 'From my Studio Roof' were made at Birchington. As well as these informal paintings of his family, he made a habit of painting 'wedding portraits' whenever members of his family married, and the paintings of his extended family are very numerous.

Solomon's paintings were selling well. At about the time of these family moves, he was being paid between £150 and £350 for a single portrait, and according to a list compiled after his death by his widow, was at that time earning not less than £1000 a year, and probably considerably more. This was enough to support a family and two households comfortably. The year 1906 saw his apotheosis as a member of the artistic establishment. Olga Phillips' biography of Solomon tells the story. "One evening of the year 1906, his mother-in-law was giving a dance at her home in Queens Gardens, Bayswater. Mrs S J S was present on this occasion – when information was given that someone downstairs wanted to see her. It was the custom for several models to be at the RA on election night, and the fortunate one who first delivered the news to the newly-elected member's house received a guinea as reward for his good news. A model from the Royal Academy had arrived with a note, announcing the news of Solomon's election as a full member; this was in his own writing and read: 'Dear Edlam (this was a fancy name by which he called his wife) All right . . . I'm in full RA. Will be with you in an hour. Tod'. A well-known wag of the period described him as 'Solomon R Ad in all his glory' ".[6]

Until the First World War Solomon's time was increasingly taken up with public commissions and portraits of leading professional men. His daughters remember the only time their father was really angry was when he was painting Asquith's portrait. Asquith, then Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party, came to the studio for a sitting not long before the first General Election of 1910. The girls had put a poster for the conservative candidate, Lord Claude Hamilton, in the window where Asquith could hardly fail to see it. Solomon, the most polite of men and always anxious to put his sitters at their ease, was furious with them. This portrait of Asquith suffered further indignity before it was moved to its present home in the Liberal Club. It was exhibited at the Academy where 'Votes for Women' was scrawled across it in violet ink.

Another large commission was for a panel in the Houses of Parliament entitled 'The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth to marry'. Over this Solomon took, as usual, infinite pains. Each figure in the picture is an individual portrait, and several members of his family were pressed into service as models. 'Queen Elizabeth' herself was a professional model who quarrelled endlessly with Iris Solomon's governess. A younger colleague, Amshewitz, described seeing the picture completed and then later 'all scraped like a postage stamp, only Elizabeth's head remaining' – to be painted again, better than before. This painting, in which parts of the queen's dress, the throne and the lamps are gilded, is painted in a different manner from his other work and with hard outlines to the figures – his 'mural manner'. However, the centrality of the subject with the surrounding swirl of courtiers is very typical of Solomon's designs.

Solomon advocated his belief in rigorous self-criticism to his pupils at the Royal Academy, where he was a popular teacher, his small stature affectionately satirised in their ditty 'Here comes Toddy, Toddy, All head and no body'. He wrote a handbook published in 1910 on 'The Practice of Oil Painting and Drawing' in which he summarised his teaching methods, and in easy, unpretentious prose stated his artistic position,



The Coronation Luncheon given in Guildhall to their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary 29 June 1911
completed in 1922 oil on canvas
The picture shows the scene after luncheon. Grace has been sung and the Lord Mayor has risen 'to invite this large and distinguished gathering to drink . . . to the health of His Most Excellent Majesty, George V'.
Guildhall *Reproduced by kind permission of the Guildhall*

invoking Velazquez as the ideal of unmannered realism, with a broad touch and simple presentation. He stressed the importance of careful workmanship and deplored 'the many forces that are at work and have inspired this breaking-away from all workman-like traditions'. The book is mostly practical and sensible, reflecting his own personality if not entirely his own artistic practice. 'Leave the poseurs alone, and see to it that your methods are sane though modest'. He affirms his belief in the value of hard work. 'We do not get stronger by watching other men lift weights. Nor are weights lifted, or pictures composed, either at the beginning or at any time, without effort'. He is throughout extremely cautious about new or different painting methods. 'Many bids for fame are made by men who, having nothing to say, invent a new language to say it in, and hope that their jargon may be mistaken for originality, as it not infrequently is by the immature critic and the modish amateur'. As he sees it, the originality of a work resides in the artist's personal interpretation of the visual facts which he confronts, for although Fact is King, Nature is not the only standard by which pictures are judged. Deviation from strict adherence to visual fact must be allowed in favour of finding decorative schemes and personal expression, although Solomon is rather grudging about this. 'Allowances must be made for the temperament of the artist . . . we must be tolerant of his mannerisms, which I suppose we should define as departures, as subtle variations, from what is actually seen in favour of personal expression'.[7]

Is there a slightly embattled quality about this book? It was published during a time of increasing onslaughts against academic traditions. Solomon rather oddly attacks 'the modern cult of realism, the multiplicity of art exhibitions, the not unmixed blessing of the advance in chemical science and the superstition that because of the opacity of pigments corrections can be ventured without due preparation'. There are inconsistencies in Solomon's viewpoint, especially when one looks at some of his own early subject paintings. For us the realism in them is often outweighed by the mannerisms of the period. However, in his art we do see a gradual abandonment of 'High Art' mannerisms in favour of a more straightforward realism, as his subject painting gives way to portraiture. The genuine feeling which he would wish to have in his work is not easily come by – the drama and emotion of the subject pictures tends to be 'borrowed' and rather hollow. He is at his best in portraits of his own family, where fact and personal feeling sit easily together.

Early in 1914 Solomon was persuaded to take over a commission for a picture of the Coronation Luncheon in Guildhall. A fellow Academician, John Bacon, had died after starting on it. Solomon, who decided to repaint the picture from scratch, began making studies



Mrs S J Solomon 1889
Catalogue No 9



The Field 1906
Catalogue No 19



Eve 1908 oil on canvas
Ealing Public Libraries
Reproduced by kind permission of the London Borough of Ealing

of the King, Queen, the Prince of Wales and Princess Mary, and, in one of the committee rooms in Westminster Hall, of the ministers and MPs present at the luncheon. While working on these he witnessed meetings and incidents which led him to suspect the imminence of war. He gives a vivid account of the actual day that England declared war on Germany: 'Everyone remembers the feeling of anxiety in England as to whether the politicians would leave France to bear alone the brunt of a German invasion – I can recall that tense feeling at a meeting of the Royal Academy Council, held in one of that beautiful suite of rooms – the remnant of old Burlington House. A fine Reynolds is over the fireplace, other old masters line the walls, a self-portrait of Gainsborough among them. A dozen silver candelabra with their lighted candles lend a note of serious dignity to the room. The President, Sir Edward Poynter, sits under the Reynolds. Sir Aston Webb, Seymour Lucas, Ouless, Sargent and others sit round the table conducting the business of the institution. Towards the end of our meeting an eerie distant shouting is heard from a howling mass of presumably young people swaying up St James's Street. It had been announced from Buckingham Palace that we were also to take up arms against Germany'.[8]

Solomon, now aged fifty-four, cast about for a way in which he could help in the war effort. He supported the proposals for setting up a Volunteer Corps for Home Defence and designed the Athene-headed medallion which eventually became the badge for all the Volunteer corps. He enrolled in the Artists' Volunteer Corps with its headquarters at Burlington House. Amongst the artist volunteers were other veterans such as Lavery, Sir George Frampton, and his old friend Arthur Hacker.

At the outbreak of war Solomon remembered a conversation he had once had about concealing men during the Boer War. When reports on German methods of locating British artillery began to appear, he realised that cover from the air was going to be a vital factor in the fighting. He immediately began to experiment with screens of butter muslin, sending his wife and children to buy huge batches of material and dolly-dyes in green, brown and yellow. His daughters remember dyeing the material in the bath and spreading it out to dry in the sun of that first August Bank Holiday. He corresponded copiously about ideas for concealing guns and men throughout 1915. These letters bore fruit and he was invited to visit the war front to inspect the French work on camouflage, and report on possibilities for the British. As a result of his reports he was enlisted into the Royal Engineers and sent to Flanders to help Colonel Francis Wyatt set up a British camouflage section. A letter from General Sir Douglas Haig (whom he later painted) dated 31 December 1915 requested 'that the necessary military status may be given to Mr S J Solomon, RA, to enable him to carry out his duties in connection with the supervision of the camouflage work. I recommend that he be granted a temporary commission of the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. I consider that this rank is commensurate with the responsibilities and importance of his duties, and as he will commence his work on arrival in this country, I request that the necessary notification may be published as soon as possible in the London Gazette'.[9] Solomon's ideas on the uses for, and the importance of, camouflage in this new war had taken many months to make headway. The French were ahead of the British, largely due to the efforts of a fashionable Parisian portrait painter, Giron de Scevola, whose appearance, always impeccable in white kid gloves, may have done something to promote his cause. But, as Solomon remarked, the French army people 'are not as conservative as ours'.

The camouflage section, disguised under the title Special Works Park, assembled at St Omer on 17 March 1916 with an advanced base at Poperinghe, but finally settled in a disused factory at Wimereux outside Boulogne. The French helped the British until they had gained some experience, and Solomon enjoyed this liaison with people, most of whom had been students like him at École de Beaux Arts. Solomon recruited several British artists not yet called up. One was Walter Russell, an accomplished portrait painter and later a keeper of the Royal Academy. Russell was fluent in French and helped to keep the increasing numbers of French female workers happy as they tied hessian on to netting. Other artists at Special Works Park included L D Symington, a theatrical designer, Oliver Bernard, artist-designer, who won an MC, Harry Paget, who later specialised in tank camouflage, Ian Strang, Colin Gill and Leon Underwood. The work could be dangerous, as the camoufleur was required to crawl into no-man's land at dawn and dusk to record the enemy's field of fire by sitting with his back to the German lines to sketch the landscape. These drawings were used to alter features and confuse the German gunners' aiming marks. When the war artists Wyndham Lewis and Augustus John, trying to find Ian Strang and imagining camouflage to be 'an admirable job', discovered they were in the thick of the fighting, they hastily withdrew in their staff car.[10]

Special Works Park was responsible for producing camouflage netting and screens for concealing batteries

of the Victorian cult of the Sublime – but they have subtly erotic undercurrents. With their insubstantial fluffiness they point up the smooth solidity of the human form, which they half conceal, half reveal. 'Eve' is a full-blown piece of erotica in which Solomon demonstrates his strength as a flesh painter, that ability so highly prized by the Victorians. He shows his complete understanding of tonal values and his mastery of warm and cool colour. It is a striking painting, but perhaps it was too late for its time – he never managed to sell it and it remained propped up in his studio until his death, after which his widow was impelled to give it away.

The same note of melodrama runs through Solomon's other subject paintings. Many of these have been destroyed or are as yet untraced, but contemporary reproductions of pictures such as 'Niobe' and 'Ajax and Cassandra' show a similar apolcalyptic vision. They appear 'stagey', lacking in emotional tension – the tension is physical, expressed in the dramatic poses of the bodies, and we receive the strong impression that Solomon's characters are all players, designed chiefly to display their physical forms. This is true of the 'St George' which he painted as his diploma work for the Royal Academy, though apparently less true of a painting entitled 'Echo and Narcissus', which drew special praise from A Lys Baldry, writing in The Studio in 1896. Baldry argues that although the latter painting has a real emotional charge, Solomon is in fact an 'experimentalist'. 'The fascinations of novel effects influence him greatly; and, above all, he is attracted by the problems which flesh painting presents. He is especially a painter of the nude, delighting in its colour effects and in the opportunities which it offers for dealing with delicate modulations of gentle tone and subtle tint'.[12]

Solomon's quite extensive work in illustration displays the same love of the dramatic set piece. His actors are distributed in their most telling attitudes. His illustrations to Israel Zangwill's short stories from 'Dreamers of the Ghetto' and Stanley Weyman's 'The Long Night' afforded him excellent directorial opportunities. The illustrations, published in The Graphic of 1897 and 1903 respectively, were designed to accompany lengthy dramatic captions. An example from Zangwill's 'The Turkish Messiah' is: 'As he now stood before them in naked majesty, the water dripping from his black beard and hair, a perfect manly figure, scarred only by self-inflicted scourgings, awe and wonder held them breathless with expectation'. One can hardly imagine a more mouth-watering subject for Solomon in his dramatic mode.

The portraits, however, are in a completely different emotional key. Which paintings did Solomon consider the more important? The ideals of High Art and the growing popularity of photography reduced the value of portraiture in contemporary public esteem. But nowadays the portraits, in which the artist's personality is subservient to that of the sitter, seem to carry more genuine feeling. The compositions are conventional but beautifully balanced. Solomon often takes a low viewpoint, placing the heads high on the canvas against a darker ground for maximum effect, and, where the highest lights of the painting are concentrated in the flesh tones, Solomon can more effectively bring out the personality of the sitter. Lys Baldry remarks on his 'faculty of perceiving and accentuating what are the essentials in a likeness, because he not only paints what he sees, but sees as well what it is important to make other people notice'.[13]

In the portrait of 'Mrs Patrick Campbell as Paula Tanqueray' Solomon's love of theatrical effects and his ability to make a telling portrait have mingled particularly well. It is an impressive picture, owing something to Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse, but more dramatically lit. As the Hon. John Collier notes in his book of 1905 on portrait painting, artificial light was rarely used in contemporary portraiture, 'with the exception of a few theatrical portraits such as the one of Mrs Campbell by Mr Solomon, where the effect of the footlights is well given . . . I think it is unduly neglected.'[14] Certainly this painting, where the light catches the head and shoulders and the frothy lace and satin dress, and glints from the gilded rococo screen, is one of Solomon's most successful works.

The strength of Solomon's portraiture can best be realised by comparison with other contemporary painters. He had the ability to realise the personality of the sitter in a wonderfully unforced manner. When his small picture of Jerome K Jerome was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in 1967, Keith Richards drew attention to it in the Burlington Magazine. 'There are two portraits of Jerome K Jerome. The first was painted in the late 1880s by Solomon J Solomon and is by far the most impressive of the pair. Small in scale and compact in style, it has about it an almost Gauguinesque intensity of feeling. The second portrait, a de Laszlo of 1921, is an all too characteristic example of Board Room impressionism'.[15]

What did Solomon's contemporaries think of his work? William Rothenstein gives an account of

meeting him in his book 'Men and Memories'. Writing of his days at the Slade at the turn of the century, he says: 'I was given an introduction to Solomon J Solomon, then a rising young artist whose first exhibited pictures had made something of a stir at the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy. Solomon showed himself to be an exceptionally capable painter of the big Salon 'machine'. Immoderate labour and skills were, year by year, spent on these immense fabrications – historical, biblical or oriental – signifying little. Solomon's 'Samson' was perhaps the most efficient example of this type of picture in England. Students were rather dazzled by his power of painting nude figures. He was all for French methods, and thought little of the teaching they gave at the Slade. He strongly urged me to go to Paris . . . I therefore persuaded my father, to whom Solomon had written, to consent to my going . . .'[16] This story illustrates not only Solomon's stature as a painter but also his eagerness to help younger painters, especially if his Jewish connections were likely to be useful. Bomberg and Gertler were also beneficiaries of his kindness.

Solomon's work is discussed, with that of his contemporaries, in an interesting review of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in the Art Journal of 1908 by G K Chesterton. Chesterton's status as a writer did not preclude him from having many of the prejudices of his time, including a generally anti-semitic stance, but he makes some unusual observations: "One class of pictures which certainly do not look as if they would fade away are the pictures of Solomon J Solomon. They have an obstinate and splendid solidity which in some curious way baffles the mind. Mr Solomon J Solomon is the hardest of all artists to describe largely because he is so good. His picture in this Academy of 'The Birth of Eve' is really a wonderful piece of work in his own powerful and palpable style. The conception of the lower part of Eve's body swinging, as it were, in the sunlight while the upper part is overshadowed and eclipsed by the terrible wings of eternal beings, is a fine general conception; the lines of the design have a sound and inevitable swing. And yet there is something in the treatment of the whole thing that seems unsatisfactory in being so satisfactory. For a long time I thought that nothing could express this subconscious something, which is not a fault in Mr Solomon, but is simply an absence in him, an absence which could never become apparent but for his striking and triumphant talent in every other respect. I suddenly realised what I had missed when my eye fell on Mr Waterhouse's 'Apollo and Daphne'. It was that indescribable thing that was the Middle Ages; the Gothic which mixed the saintly with the grotesque, the coloured windows, which depend on a light behind, the double meaning of things, the irony of the universe. The great Jews of the Middle Ages were outside this quaintness and complexity; with the full weight of their excellent intellects they despised it; Renan, who admired them, speaks of their *'positivisme juive'*. I have remarked that Jews are never misers; and when I come to think of it I can see the reason. They are never misers because they are never mystics . . ."[17]

Since Solomon's death in 1927 British painting has gone in many different directions, but not in the direction of the old traditions. These traditions served an empire whose values could never now be upheld. Contemporaries such as Whistler, Sickert and Steer are now seen to have been the 'modern' painters, and their work makes Solomon's look older than it actually was. Although he painted proficiently in many styles, Solomon seems to have differentiated between what he allowed himself privately and what he considered to be public art. He painted to please a conservative public, and, sure of his painting skills, he made a point of displaying them. Above all, he seems to have seen himself as a craftsman. His work is traditional, even anachronistic, but it is work of excellent quality.

Jenny Pery

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Some memories of father



Lt Col S J Solomon at 18 Hyde Park Gate 1916

As a young man, father was patronised by Samuel Montagu, later Lord Swaythling, who one day received a note saying 'In great trouble, please help' signed S Solomon. On going round to the address on the note, he discovered the artist, Simeon Solomon, in a drunken state. He therefore told father that there must be no further confusion between you and this other artist. So father, who till then had only been Solomon Solomon, adopted his father's name of Joseph and thus became known as Solomon J Solomon.

As well as being a very professional artist, father was very much a family man who, as his studio was attached to the house, probably saw more of his family than other professional men. He was always in to lunch, and quite frequently came up to have tea in the nursery and take all three of us to ride with him on the rocking horse and play Puss in the Corner. He gave us our own pony, starting with the Shetland pony, Kettle, and usually one of us rode with him in the morning, in the Row when in London, or on the sands at Birchington, where we were taught to jump over the breakwaters. Whilst he was out on this morning ride, mother went into the studio and laid out the colours on his palette so that all was ready for him to start immediately on his return.

If there was no sitter we could come into the studio and sit quietly and perhaps look at some of the old picture books he kept there. Iris remembers being there when Mr Asquith arrived for his portrait sitting and being introduced as "My baby" and told to run along . . . she was furious . . . "He called me Baby . . . *and* to the Prime Minister". Mary remembers Queen Mary coming to the studio. She came once very unexpectedly when either Viscount Lascelles or Princess Mary was being painted. The poor little maid who opened the door was petrified.

Much of the year was spent in the bungalow at Birchington, where his studio was built (by Delissa Joseph) on the edge of the cliff hanging over the sea. Sometimes the subjects of his portraits would come and stay with us whilst he was painting them. He also had an occasional model to stay, which created something of a domestic problem in those Edwardian days. They could not be expected to eat with our parents in the dining-room, nor could they be relegated to the kitchen with the maids, so they ate with us in the school-room.

When they were in London our parents always dined on Friday evening with our grandmother and other members of her family. Saturday mornings they went to synagogue or to an art gallery; father neither rode nor entered his studio on a Saturday. The rest of the day was often spent visiting some of his numerous sisters or brothers and their children. His family



Ella and Tod at Tadworth Court 1904



A family group at Birchington 1906

nickname 'Toddy' suited him and most of his friends adopted it. He was particular about his dress: clothes always had to fit the occasion and the shoes had to be the right ones. His usual daytime costume of riding breeches and yellowish linen painting jacket was his working gear. If he had no sitter after lunch he would have a short nap in an armchair in the dining-room, and then paint again till the light diminished. Often in those foggy days it got dark by the middle of the afternoon in the winter. After tea, which he would have perhaps with us in the nursery, he would go out for a short walk, and when we were a bit older one of us would accompany him. We talked about the stars (if they were visible), a great deal about the architecture of the houses we passed, and about any books we were reading at the time . . . we were all voracious readers. It was a liberal education we received on those late afternoon walks. Father was widely knowledgeable and he must have picked up all kinds of information as he went along, and must have had an excellent memory, in spite of having had a fairly sketchy early education.

He was only of a medium height, with a round head, dark brown hair and a reddish moustache. He had blue eyes and a good colour. He had a very pleasant light tenor voice and we loved to hear him sing ballads and lieder by Schumann and Schubert, accompanied by mother. He used to tell a story of how Tosti had once heard him sing at a party, and had told him that if he ever gave up painting as a career, he could make a living as a professional singer. He certainly enjoyed singing and often sang lustily whilst taking his morning bath, and once sang at the Royal Academy Annual Banquet.

Iris Montagu

Mary Rubinstein 1990







Above, Solomon in his studio at 18 Hyde Park Gate and below, another view of the studio

Mr and Mrs S J Solomon on the Thames at Bourne End 1920

Catalogue

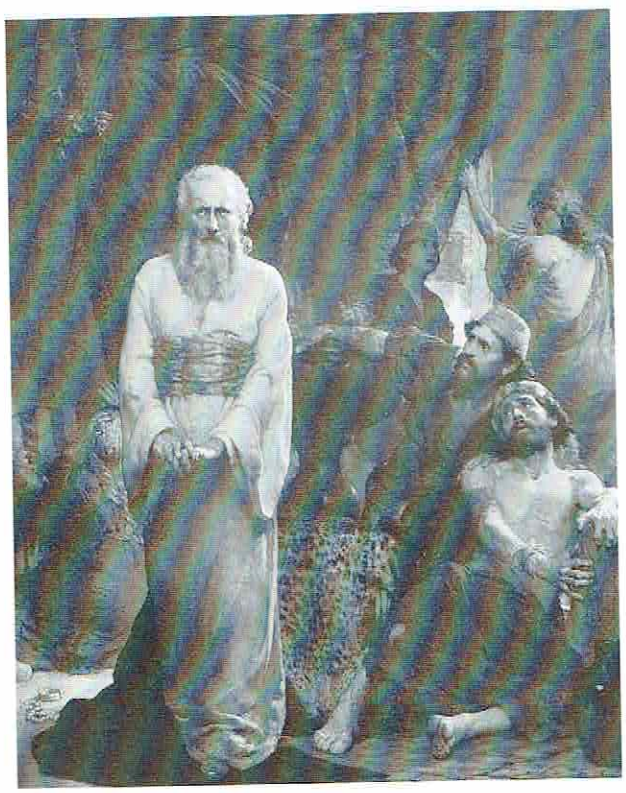
The measurements are given in centimetres and inches (height first)

1 Self-portrait aged seventeen 1877
Oil on canvas
61 x 53.3 cm 24 x 21 ins
Lent by the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu

2 Job hearing of his misfortunes 1881
Oil on canvas
125.7 x 99 cm 49½ x 39 ins
Lent by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

3 Conversation Piece 1884
Oil on canvas
101.6 x 127 cm 40 x 50 ins
Lent by Leighton House Museum and Art Gallery

4 Study for **Samson** 1887
Oil on canvas
102 x 152 cm 40 x 60 ins
Lent by Mrs Gillian Eves
One of three preparatory studies for the large painting 'Samson' in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool



Job hearing of his misfortunes 1881
Catalogue No 2

5 Jerome K Jerome c 1889
Oil on panel
24.1 x 14.9 cm 9½ x 5⅞ ins
Lent by the National Portrait Gallery
Jerome K Jerome, author of 'Three Men in a Boat', was a close personal friend

6 Self-portrait c 1896
Oil on canvas
101.5 x 77.5 cm 40 x 30½ ins
Lent by the David Messum Gallery, London W1
Possibly a portrait to celebrate his engagement to Ella Montagu

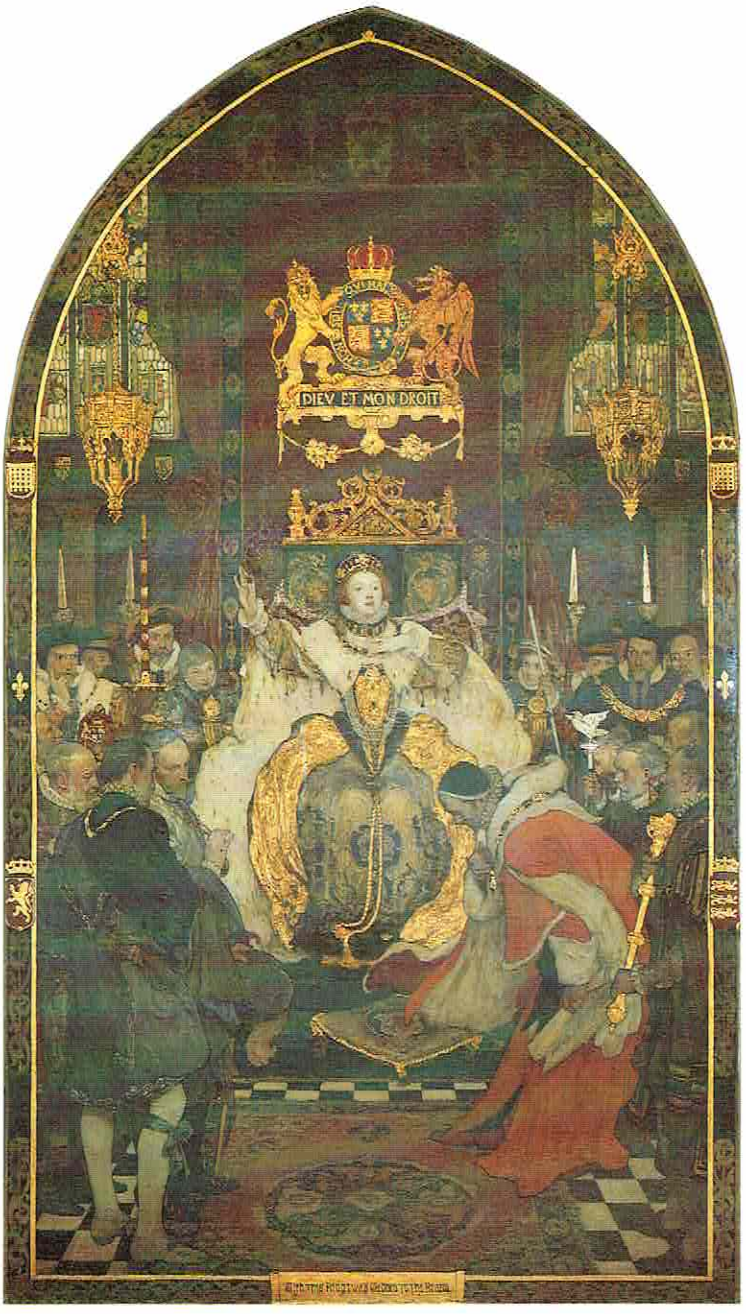
7 Mrs Hyman Montagu 'Belle-Mère' 1896
Oil on canvas
56 x 45.7 cm 22 x 18 ins
Lent by Mrs Colette Green
A portrait of his future mother-in-law painted to celebrate his engagement

8 Garden at St John's Wood, Evening 1897/8
Oil on canvas
90.3 x 86.3 cm 43 x 34 ins
Lent by Mrs John Dupays

9 Mrs Solomon J Solomon 1897/8
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 61 cm 30 x 24 ins
Lent by the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu
Exhibited Royal Academy 1898
Cut down from a full length-portrait, which can be seen in 'The Breakfast Table' Catalogue No 35

10 Sketch for
Charles I demanding the Five Members at the Guildhall 1641-2 1897
Oil on canvas
110 x 78.7 cm 43¼ x 31 ins
Lent by Dr Jeremy Montagu
Study for the large painting in the Ambulatory of the Royal Exchange

11 Charles I 1897
Watercolour on paper
74 x 48 cm 29 x 19 ins
Lent by Mrs Margaret Manser
Study for the painting in the Royal Exchange (see above)



The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth to marry
1911 oil on canvas on plaster
Committee staircase, Houses of Parliament
The probable identities of the various portraits are: Viscount Ullswater, Lord Swaythling, Sir Courtenay Ilbert, Mr John Burns, Viscount Harcourt, Colonel John Nolan, Mr R Cunninghame Graham, Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Mr Dorian Solomon, Iris Solomon, Mr David Solomon, Sir Henry Seymour King and Mr Clinton Dent.
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The Dutch Engraving 1920
Catalogue No 32

12 Sir Victor Horsley 1897
Oil on panel
35 x 26 cm 13¾ x 10¼ ins
Lent by the Wellcome Institute Library, London
Portrait study for the painting 'An Octave for Mr Ernest Hart' (not in exhibition) which contains eleven individual portraits

13 Sir James Paget 1897
Oil on panel
35 x 26 cm 13¾ x 10¼ ins
Lent by the Wellcome Institute Library, London
Portrait study for 'An Octave for Mr Ernest Hart'

14 After the Ball 1898
Pastel on paper
73.5 x 47 cm 29 x 18½ ins
Lent by the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu
A study of Mrs Solomon made in the first year of marriage

15 Mary Solomon as a baby 1898
Oil on canvas
54.5 x 43 cm 21½ x 17 ins
Lent by Mrs Ronald Rubinstein



Study for **Equipped** 1900
Catalogue No 16

16 Study for **Equipped** 1900
Oil on canvas
91.4 x 61 cm 36 x 24 ins
Lent by the Forbes Magazine Collection, New York
Detail study for the large painting 'Equipped' exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1900

17 Dorian Solomon as a toddler 1902
Oil on canvas
48.3 x 40.6 cm 19 x 16 ins
Lent by Mrs Colette Green

18 Mary Solomon aged four 1902
Oil on canvas
73 x 54 cm 28¾ x 21¼ ins
Lent by Mr Paul Manser
This painting appears in the painting entitled 'The Breakfast Table' Catalogue No 35

19 The Field 1906
Oil on canvas
184 x 146 cm 72½ x 57½ ins
The Ben Uri Art Society
Exhibited at the Royal Academy 1906
The painting of Mary Solomon on her pony Kettle appears in the painting 'The Breakfast Table' Catalogue No 35

20 Mary Solomon on a pony 1906
Oil on canvas
54 x 44.5 cm 21¼ x 17½ ins
Lent by Mr Paul Manser
A study for 'The Field'

21 Nude Study c 1908
Oil on canvas
61 x 50.8 cm 24 x 20 ins
Lent by Mrs Colette Green
Probably an exploratory study for the large painting 'The Birth of Eve' of the same date, now in the collection of Ealing District Council

22 Dr Ludwig Mond 1909
Oil on canvas
127 x 101.6 cm 50 x 40 ins
Lent by the National Portrait Gallery
Dr Ludwig Mond was an eminent chemist, manufacturer and art collector



The Rt Hon H H Asquith, Prime Minister 1909
Catalogue No 23

23 The Rt Hon H H Asquith, Prime Minister
1909
Oil on canvas
120 x 90 cm 48 x 36 ins
Lent by the National Liberal Club
Herbert Henry Asquith, 1st Earl of Oxford and Asquith (1852-1928) was Prime Minister from 1908-1916

24 Ramsay Macdonald MP c 1910
Oil on canvas
90.2 x 72.4 cm 35½ x 28½ ins
Lent by the National Portrait Gallery
James Ramsay Macdonald (1866-1937) was Prime Minister from 1929-1935 (and for a few months in 1924)

25 Mischa Elman playing the violin 1911
Oil on canvas
75 x 62 cm 29½ x 24½ ins
Ben Uri Art Society
A study for the painting of Mischa Elman now in the Bezalel Museum, Jerusalem

26 The Lord Chancellor 1911
Oil on canvas
73.6 x 38 cm 29 x 15 ins
Lent with the permission of the Advisory Committee for Works of Art in the House of Commons
A detail sketch for the large painting 'The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth I to marry'. The model for the Lord Chancellor is Lewis, 1st Viscount Harcourt

27 The Path through the Fields 1913
Watercolour on paper
64 x 48.5 cm 25¼ x 19 ins
Lent by Mrs Ronald Rubinstein
Painted on holiday in Brundall in the Norfolk Broads

28 King George V 1914
Oil on panel
61 x 53.3 cm 24 x 21 ins
Lent by Mr Christopher Rubinstein
The portrait was a study for the large painting 'The Coronation Luncheon given in Guildhall to their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary, 29 June 1911'. Solomon took over this commission after the death of John Bacon RA in 1913 and finally completed the picture in 1922.



Mischa Elman playing the violin 1911
Catalogue No 25



The Breakfast Table 1921
Catalogue No 35
Several other paintings by Solomon can be seen in this painting



The Beach at Birchington 1920
Catalogue No 34



Waiting 1922
Catalogue No 37



Nina Salaman 1918
Catalogue No 29

29 Nina Salaman 1918
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 106.7 cm 60 x 42 ins
Lent by Mrs Esther Salaman
Nina Salaman was an eminent scholar and poetess and translator of Yehudah HaLevi and other Hebrew poets. She was the wife of Dr Redcliffe Salaman FRS and the mother of six children. A special interest was the education of young Jewish girls.

30 Erecting the first Observation Post Tree c 1918
Pastel on paper
64 x 48.5 cm 25 x 19¼ ins
Lent by the Imperial War Museum
A later study from memory of the event in 1916 at which Solomon was present

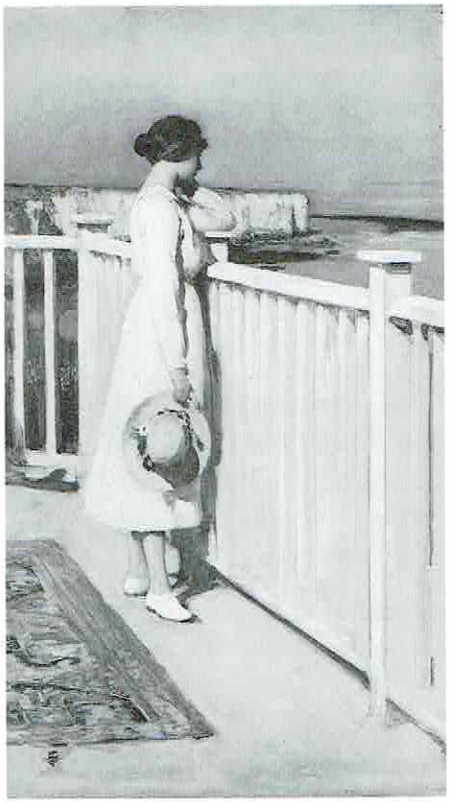
31 Sketch for **The No 9 Bus** c 1919
Watercolour on paper
55.9 x 44.5 cm 22 x 17½ ins
Lent by Mrs Colette Green
A study for the large painting 'The No 9 Bus'. The figures in the painting are, left to right, Mrs Dorian Solomon, Hon Ewen Montagu, Mrs S J Solomon and Mrs Ronald Rubinstein

32 The Dutch Engraving 1920
Oil on canvas
86.4 x 66 cm 34 x 26 ins
Lent by Mr Christopher Rubinstein
The picture was painted at Birchington and the figure is Mrs Ronald Rubinstein who claims that her father always considered the back of her neck her best feature!

33 From my Studio Roof 1920
Oil on canvas
71.1 x 40.6 cm 28 x 16 ins
Lent by Dundee Art Galleries and Museums
Painted at Birchington with Mrs Ronald Rubinstein as the model

34 The Beach at Birchington 1920
Watercolour on paper
51 x 38 cm 20 x 15 ins
Lent by the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu
A view from Solomon's studio window at Birchington

35 The Breakfast Table 1921
Oil on canvas
83.8 x 63.5 cm 33 x 25 ins
Lent by Mrs Ronald Rubinstein
The interior of the house at Birchington with Mrs S J Solomon and her younger daughter Iris (the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu). Solomon's paintings of his wife and daughter Mary (Mrs Ronald Rubinstein) can be seen on the walls. The landscape visible is by another painter



From my Studio Roof 1920
Catalogue No 33
Reproduced by kind permission of Dundee Art Galleries and Museums

36 Castle at Durbuy-sur-Ourthe, Belgium 1921
Watercolour on paper
52 x 62.2 cm 20½ x 24½ ins
Lent by Mrs Ronald Rubinstein
Painted on holiday in Belgium

37 Waiting 1922
Oil on canvas
122 x 76.2 cm 48 x 30 ins
Lent by the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu
Painted during Iris Solomon's engagement to the Hon Ewen Montagu, who was jokingly observed by the Solomon family always to keep her waiting

38 Lord Swaythling 1922
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 61 cm 30 x 24 ins
Lent by the Hon Mrs Ewen Montagu
Louis Samuel Montagu, 2nd Baron Swaythling (1869-1927)
A study for the portrait painted at the time of Iris Solomon's engagement to his son

39 Earl Haig 1922
Oil on paper mounted on panel
60 x 50 cm 23½ x 19½ ins
Lent by the Imperial War Museum
A study for the portrait exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1922 and now in Clifton College, Bristol. Field-Marshall Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig (1861-1928) was responsible for Solomon's commission during the 1st World War

40 Ronald Rubinstein 1923
Oil on canvas
75 x 64.7 cm 29½ x 25½ ins
Lent by Mrs Anne Bower
A wedding portrait of Mary Solomon's husband, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1923

41 Trees 1924
Watercolour on paper
40.6 x 51 cm 16 x 20 ins
Lent by Mrs Ronald Rubinstein
Painted on holiday in France

42 Les Dents at Lake Annecy c 1924
Watercolour on paper
54 x 67 cm 21¼ x 26⅜ ins
Lent by Mrs Margaret Manser
Painted on holiday in France



Earl Haig 1922
Catalogue No 39
Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum

43 Mrs Dorian Solomon playing the piano 1925
Oil on canvas
89 x 76.2 cm 35 x 30 ins
Lent by Mrs Colette Green
A wedding portrait of Paule de Castaigne, Dorian's first wife

44 Mrs Arthur Sebag-Montefiore 1925
Oil on canvas
68 x 49.5 cm 26¾ x 19½ ins
Lent by Mrs Myrtle Franklin

45 Les Laveuses d'Antibes 1926
Oil on canvas
54.6 x 47 cm 21½ x 18½ ins
Lent by Mrs Colette Green

Biographical notes

1860	September 16 Solomon born to Joseph Solomon and Helena Lichtenstadt in South London. Nicknamed 'Toddy' by his eleven brothers and sisters
1876	Attended Heatherley's Art School
1877	Entered Royal Academy Schools (President Sir Frederick Leighton, taught by Millais and Alma-Tadema)
1879	Studied at Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris, under Cabanel Befriended by Prince Lucien Buonaparte Studied for three months at Academy in Munich
1880-1882	Travelled in Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland and Morocco with Arthur Hacker
1881	First painting exhibited in Royal Academy
1882-1883	Studied in Cabanel's studio for nine months
1886	Founder member of the New English Art Club
1887	Took studio at 18 Holland Park Road with Watts, Val Prinsep and Sir Frederic Leighton as neighbours Painted 'Samson'
1891	Founder member of Society of Portrait Painters Founder member and President of The Maccabeans
1896	Elected Associate member of the Royal Academy
1897	July 6 married Ella Montagu, daughter of Hyman Montagu, solicitor and numismatist. Honeymooned on Thames, and spent summer near Wallingford. In autumn settled at 12 Marlborough Place, St John's Wood
1898	Daughter, Mary, born Became a member of the Savage Club, proposed by Malcolm Salaman
1900	Moved to 60 Finchley Road, which had integral studio
1901	Son, Dorian Joseph, born
1903	Daughter, Iris, born. Moved to 18 Hyde Park Gate
1905	Bought bungalow at Birchington in Kent
1906	Elected as full member of the Royal Academy
1907	Elected as member of the Athenaeum Club under Rule II
1910	His book 'The Practice of Oil Painting and Drawing' published
1914	Commissioned to paint Coronation Luncheon at the Guildhall Enrolled in Artists' Volunteer Corps
1915-1918	Engaged in camouflage work in England, Scotland and Flanders
1918	Elected President of the Royal Society of British Artists
1920	Founder member of the After-Dinner Club, which held meetings at the premises of the RBA His book 'Strategic Camouflage' published
1924-1926	President of the Ben Uri Art Society
1927	July 27 died at Birchington after some months of illness

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List of paintings

by Solomon J Solomon

The following is a chronological list of known paintings executed by Solomon J Solomon. It is made up from the Royal Academy records, from references by Olga Somech Phillips in her biography of the artist and from unpublished lists kept by the late Mrs Solomon and her daughters. Inevitably it is incomplete, as Solomon's prolific output has been widely dispersed through sales and acquisitions, and no records have been kept. This list of nearly 300 works probably represents the majority of his paintings, but gives little idea of his output in terms of sketches, watercolours, pastels, illustration and other work. However, when read in conjunction with the biographical notes, it gives a clear picture of the professional working practice and the productivity of the painter.

Abbreviations:

RA Exhibited Royal Academy
NEAC Exhibited New English Art Club
RBA Exhibited Royal Society of British Artists

1877
Self-portrait aged 17 (two versions)

1880
The Artist's Two Sisters dressed for a Ball

1881
Job hearing of his misfortunes (exh Liverpool 1881)
Portrait of a Gentleman (RA)
Mother and Child

1882
Reflection of the artist (Hal O'Niam Gallery 1985)

1883
Susie Helena Bentwich
Waiting (RA)
M Bical (RA)
Folkestone Harbour (RBA)

1884
Conversation Piece
Ruth (RA)
Portrait of a Gentleman (RA)
Crab Fishermen (RBA)

1885
Love's First Lesson (RA)
Mrs Ludwig Messel (RA)
A Reverie (RBA)
Among the Cabbages (RBA)
The Tree of Knowledge (RBA)

1886
Miss Teresa Mayer (RA)
Ajax and Cassandra (RA)
The Convalescent (exh Edinburgh)

1887
One of the Harem
Mrs Bernard Solomon (RA)
Samson (RA)
Samson sketches
Professor Gaetz (RBA)

1888
Mrs Henry Lumley (RA)
Niobe (RA)
Summer (RBA)

1889
Gladys Raphael (RA)
Sacred and Profane Love (RA)
Sir John Simon, Serjeant-at-Law (RA)
Jerome K Jerome

1890
Mrs George Rosenthal (RA)
Hippolyta (RA)

1891
Sir Jerome Murch, Mayor of Bath
Portrait of a Lady (RA)
The Judgement of Paris (RA)
The Awakening
Mrs Delissa Joseph (NEAC)
Miss Berens (NEAC)

1892
Philip Haldinstein (RA)
Orpheus (RA)

1893
Mrs W J Armitage (RA)
Mr W J Armitage (RA)
Your Health (RA)

1894
Mrs Patrick Campbell as 'Paula Tanqueray' (RA)
I Zangwill (exh Budapest State Gallery)

1895
Miss Lucy Ingram (RA)
Arthur Hacker ARA (RA)
Echo and Narcissus (RA)
Dame Irene Vanburgh (exh Grafton 1897)

1896
Mrs Albert Jessel (RA)
The Birth of Love (RA)
Mrs S J Solomon in canoe
Self-portrait
Mrs Hyman Montagu 'Belle-Mère'

1897
Mrs S J Solomon on honeymoon
George Frampton ARA (RA)
Raphael Tuck (RA)
An Octave to Mr Ernest Hart (exh Wellcome Museum)
Portrait studies for above
Charles I demanding the Five Members at the Guildhall 1641-2 (Royal Exchange, presented to city by Sir Samuel Montagu in 1897)
Studies for above

1898
Mrs Kenneth Foster (RA)
Mrs S J Solomon (RA)
Sir George Faudel-Phillips, Bt GCSI 'On the Threshold of the City, 22 June 1897' (RA)
Mary Solomon as a baby
After the Ball

1899
Laus Deo! (RA)
Adolph Tuck (RA)
Joseph Smith, ex-mayor of Oldham (RA)
Hildegarde
Mrs Michael Green
Mr Illingworth of Bradford
Sir Benjamin Cohen
Illustrations to Frank Moore in The Graphic

1900
Equipped (RA)
Studies for above
B L Cohen (RA)
John Woodrow Cross (RA)
Mrs Jules de Meray (RA)
Rev Samuel
Alfred Beddington
Mrs Roscoe Brunner (RA 1901)
Souvenir
Illustrations to Pennel for Century Magazine

1901
Ellis Franklin
Sketch of Queen Victoria
Mr W H Dunn
Mr J Phillips
Mr J H Levy (presented by Liberal Club RA 1903)
Miss Nellie Stettauer (RA 1902)
Miss Grace Stettauer
Hon. Mrs Reginald Rankin (RA)
Mrs Alex Leon (RA)
Mrs W J Murphy (RA)
Dorian Solomon as a baby

1902
Madame Blanche Marchesi (RA)
William Tebb Esq
Mr Wallace
Mr Frank Lyons
Herman Stern (Lord Mickelham)
Benjamin Hansford (Lazarus)
Mary Hansford
Psyche
Mary Solomon aged four
Dorian Solomon as a toddler

1903
Mrs Benjamin Lazarus (RA)
Miss Montagu (RA)
Mr H J Levy
Mrs Murphy
Sir Joseph Sebag-Montefiore
Alfred Cohen (portrait and second version)
Arthur Beazeley's daughter
Illustrations to Stanley Weyman for The Graphic
Iris Solomon as a baby

1904
Sir Seymour King KCSL (RA) and duplicate
Albert Seligman and daughter (RA entitled Portrait of a Gentleman and his daughter)
An Allegory (RA)
Sketch for Allegory (presented to RBA)
Earl Cadogan KG (RA)
Mrs Gerald Beddington (RA)
Henry van de Bergh (RA 1905)
King Lear
Queen Victoria (presented to Edward VII by Lord Cadogan)

1905
Lilian Friedlander
Papa Painting (RA)
Mrs Williams portrait and second version
Lord Davey
Mr Williams
Mrs Edward Beddington
Lord Llangattock
Portrait of a Gentleman (RA)

1906
J Levy
Lord Davey (RA) and second version
Lilian Bentwich (RA)
The Field (RA)
Study for above
Sir Aston Webb (RA)
St George (diploma work for RA)
Dr Herman Adler, the Chief Rabbi

1907
Mrs Henry Van den Bergh (RA)
Henry Lucas (RA) and second version
Ilustrations for The Graphic

1908
Mrs Alfred Mond and her children (RA)
Eve (RA)
Nude study
Lady Aston Webb (RA)
L B Abrahams (RA) and second version
The Late Countess of Cadogan
George Giddings as Tony Lumpkin

1909
Dr Ludwig Mond (RA)
Rt Hon H H Asquith MP (RA)
A Rosenfeld (RA)
Miss Gertrude Lowy (RA)
Incense (RA)
Mrs Seeberger
Wolf Myer
William Longier, Lord Provost of Dundee (RA 1910)

1910
Ellis Franklin (second version)
Albert Jessel
Drawings for Pall Mall magazine
Ramsay Macdonald MP

1911
The Countess of Harewood (RA)
Vincent Casares (posthumous portrait)
The Commons petitioning Queen Elizabeth to marry (Houses of Parliament)
Studies for above
Henry Lucas (second version)
Mrs Model (RA 1912)
Dr Mond (second version)
Sir Charles Henry
Derek Isaac (RA 1912)
Mrs Norman Faulkner (RA 1913)
Mischa Elman
Sketch for Mischa Elman
Drawing for Daily Mail

1913
Nina Salaman
Sir Swire Smith (RA)
Tonman Mosley Esq CB (RA)
The Countess Cadogan (RA)
Mrs Close Brooks (RA)
Thomas J Barratt (RA)
The Rev W Hawker Hughes (RA 1914)
George Mosenthal and second version
Arthur Michael Samuel, Lord Mancroft (RA 1914)
Path through the fields

1914
Allan W G Campbell (RA)
Joseph Shaw KC (RA 1915)
Mrs Mathieson (RA 1915)
The Coronation Luncheon given in Guildhall to their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary, 29 June 1911
Studies for above

1915
Mrs Bernard Isaac (RA)
The Rt Hon Sir John Rhys (RA)
Captain Hugh Baillie DSO (RA)
Benjamin Nussey (RA) and second version
Rt Hon Sir Edward Clarke KC (RA 1916)
Neville L Woodroffe (RA 1917)

1916
Sons of Bernard Isaac with pony
Sketch for above
Captain Robert Sebag-Montefiore (2 posthumous portraits)
George Cohen (posthumous portrait)

1917
The Lady Rhonnda (RA)
The Lord Rhonnda (RA)
The Late Albert Jessel KC (RA)
Owen Parker (RA)
Hon Lady Mackworth (RA)
Aubrey Waley (posthumous portrait)
Professor Meldola (2 portraits)
James Van den Bergh (posthumous portrait)
Mr Hame (2 portraits)

1918
Mrs Redcliffe Salaman (RA)
John Turner JP (RA)
Edmund Mills Hann (RA)
Lt Kenneth Franklin Barratt (RA)
Richard Montagu and second version
Henry Steele (RA 1919)
Susie Bentwich on the steps of her house
Erecting the first Observation Post Tree

1919
Sir Charles Gill KC (RA)
A portrait (RA)
Ronald Morgan, 2nd Lt, 3rd South Wales Borderers (RA)
Cyril Raphael
Lord Rhonnda (second version)
Seymour Van den Bergh (posthumous portrait)
Mrs Wolf Myer
Sir George Purley
The No 9 Bus
Studies for above

1920
Sir James Martin JP (RA)
Mrs William Perkins-Bull (RA)
Joseph Shaw (second version)
From my Studio roof
Paxman family portrait
Colonel Alec Pope
General Birdwood and second version
Viscount Clive (posthumous portrait)
The Beach at Birchington
The Dutch Engraving

1921
Mrs Samuel Cohen (RA)
Sir Leonard L Cohen (RA) (2 portraits)
George P Walker (RA) (3 portraits)
Paintings of orchids for George Walker
Sir George Purley (second version)
Jeannie the dog
Castle at Durbuy-sur-Ourthe, Belgium
The Breakfast Table

1922
Field Marshal Earl Haig (RA)
Sketch for above
Hon Sir Arthur Stanley (RA)
William Perkins-Bull KC (RA)
Maurice Moscovitch (RA)
Brasso-Cattleya Olympus (RA)
Waiting (Iris Solomon) (RA)
Mrs Arthur Sebag-Montefiore
Mr Lange
Madonna of the Fields
The Necklace
Lord Lascelles
Mary Rubinstein
The Lord Swaythling (RA)

1923
Ronald Rubinstein
Sir James Stevenson, Bt, GCMG (RA)
Lady Stevenson (RA)
George Terrell Esq, President National Union of Manufacturers (RA)
Dr J E King
Sketch for Viscount Harcourt
Rev J Polak
Mrs Paxman (2 further versions of sketch)
Colonel J R P Gooden (RA 1924)
Hon Ewen Montagu
2nd Lord Swaythling (2 portraits)
Lady Swaythling (RA 1924)

1924
Sir Julian Orde (RA) and second version
Mrs Burrowes of Stradone and her son Bobby (RA)
Watercolour portrait of Mrs S J Solomon
Summer holiday sands
William Perkins Bull
Dr A G Edwards, Archbishop of Wales (RA 1925)
Les Dents at Lake Annecy
Trees

1925
Colonel W F Wyley (RA)
Mrs David Solomon (RA)
Mrs Dorian Solomon playing the piano
Mrs A Sebag-Montefiore (second version)
Girl on a leopard skin rug

1926
H H The Maharajah Gaekwar of Baroda (RA)
Sir Herbert Hunter (RA)
Les Laveuses d'Antibes
The Bishop of Worcester (RA 1927)

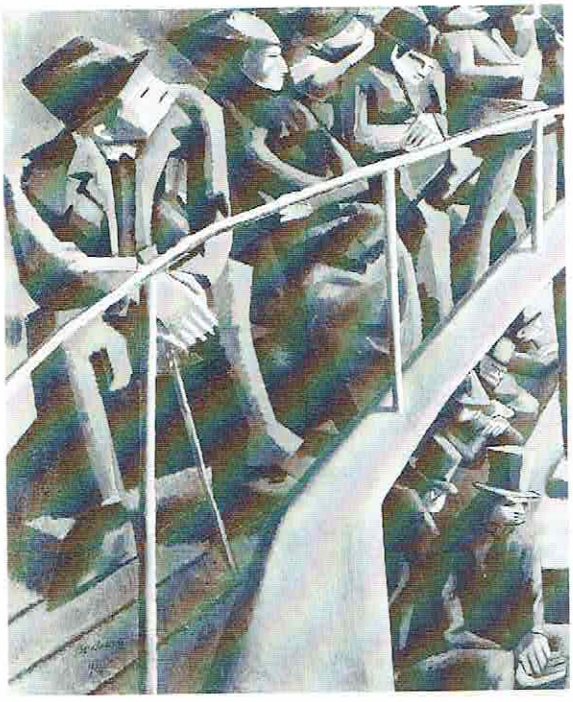
1927
Mrs Masters (RA)
Dr Mond (second version)
Design for memorial for Maccabean Society

Other paintings mentioned in various sources but without dates

Gladys Raphael
Archie Nathan and an infant
Mrs Roscoe Brunner
Mrs Hansford
Mrs Michael Green
Lord Davey
Lord Llangattock
Sir Francis Newbolt
Sir William Birdwood
Sir Leonard Cohen
Portrait of a young lady
Portrait of a lady
Lord Oxford
Rev Simeon Singer
Prince Lucien Buonaparte
Portrait of the artist's father
Portrait of the artist's mother
Norman Bentwich
Joseph Bentwich
Portrait of the artist's father with preparatory sketch
Portrait of the artist's mother with preparatory sketch
Bernard Solomon, the artist's brother
Elizabeth Barnett, the artist's sister-in-law
Henrietta Solomon, the artist's sister, playing the violin
Mrs S J Solomon, 'The Lady in the Mantilla'
Self-portrait with cap
Portrait of an Arab

BEN URI ART SOCIETY

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David Bomberg
Ghetto Theatre

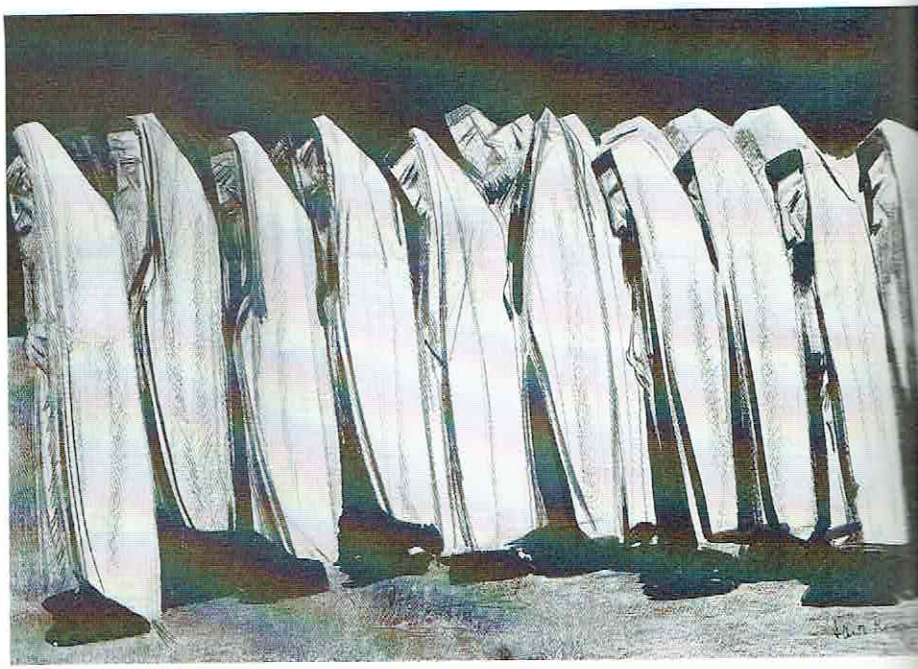
Founded in 1915, the Ben Uri Art Society celebrates its 75th Anniversary this year. The Society is a registered charity with the aims of promoting Anglo-Jewish cultural life, particularly in the visual arts. Through generous benefactions and bequests, purchases and the voluntary gifts of artists, the Society has built up an important and extensive collection of paintings, drawings and sculpture by Jewish artists, including works by David Bomberg, Jacob Epstein, Mark Gertler, Jacob Kramer, Frank Auerbach and Josef Herman (some of which are illustrated here). A catalogue was published under the title of 'Jewish Artists: The Ben Uri Collection' in 1987 and it is currently being reprinted and updated. Loans from the Permanent Collection are frequently made to public galleries for exhibition both at home and overseas.

The Society has a tradition of organising important exhibitions. In addition, the Society arranges exhibitions of works by contemporary Jewish artists, lectures, concerts and art workshops.

Jacob Epstein
Third portrait
of Kathleen



Jacob Kramer
Day of Atonement

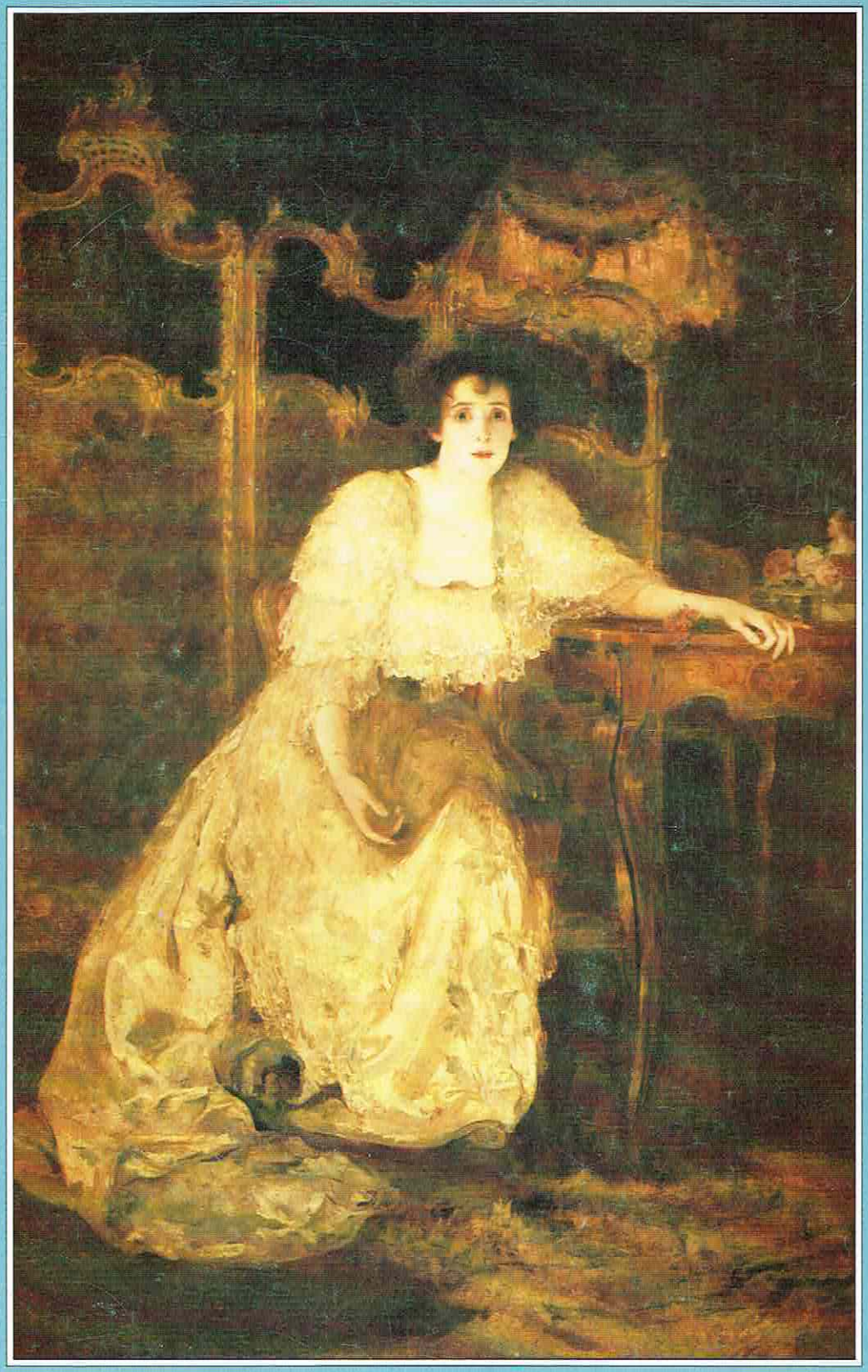




Josef Herman
Burgundian Peasants

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Ben Uri Art Society 21 Dean Street, London W1V 6NE



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(founded 1915)

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