



My favourite arts charity is Art UK. I love it even more than the Art Fund, which does so much to acquire works of art for museums and encourage visitors. I love Art UK because it was funded on a shoestring. Over many years it has taken digital photographs of more than one million works of art housed in 3,500 institutions, from hospitals and libraries to town halls and local museums.

One of those institutions is Southampton City Art Gallery. It embodies an astonishing cultural tradition that has somewhat fallen into abeyance. From the 19th century up until about the Second World War, almost all our major cities benefited from local benefactors who donated personal collections of art to their community, and often built buildings in which to house them.

One such benefactor was Southampton pharmacist Robert Chipperfield, who in 1911 left his collection of artworks to the city as well as money to build a gallery. Rather quaintly, he also stipulated that any subsequent purchases should only be undertaken in consultation with the director of The National Gallery (Tate did not exist then, but is now involved). I wonder if there is an annual ceremony where the directors of The National Gallery and Tate travel to Southampton on a special train, to be met on the platform by civic leaders so they can be whisked to the gallery to lay hands on any proposed acquisition. If there isn't, there certainly should be.

Chipperfield's bequest was realised – and then some. Southampton City Art Gallery's collection is now some 5,300 artworks strong and tells the story of western art from the Renaissance to the present day. It includes pieces by most of the Turner Prize-winning artists. They are all housed in the civic centre building, the first of its kind and a magnificent monument to Art Deco.

This gallery is home to one of the most outstanding collections of Surrealist art to be found anywhere in the country – and this summer, it is being brought to London to be exhibited at Treasure House Fair, the capital's pre-eminent interdisciplinary art fair, founded in 2023 by Thomas Woodham-Smith and Harry van der Hoorn.

The exhibition, *British Surrealism and Beyond: Treasures from Southampton City Art Gallery*, will bring together celebrated figures such as Paul Delvaux and Giorgio de Chirico alongside prominent British Surrealists Roland Penrose and Paul Nash, plus lesser-known voices. Women who thrived within Surrealism will also be represented, among them Eileen Agar, Ithell Colquhoun (the subject of a glorious Tate retrospective last year) and Catherine Yarrow. It's a splendid celebration of Surrealism – but also a reminder of the importance of civic pride. ■

THE EXHIBITIONIST

This superb celebration of British Surrealism also spotlights the importance of civic pride, says *Ed Vaizey*



FROM ABOVE: Roland Penrose's *Good Shooting* (1939, oil on canvas) and Ithell Colquhoun's *Rivières Tièdes* (1939, oil on wood) will both be exhibited at Treasure House Fair 2026, with thanks to Southampton City Art Gallery

Treasure House Fair, 24-30 June (treasurehousefair.com); southamptoncityartgallery.com

PHOTOS: LEE MILLER ARCHIVES; SOUTHAMPTON CITY ART GALLERY; NOISE ABATEMENT SOCIETY; SAMARITANS; SPIRE HEALTHCARE LTD