

**Herbert** Touring  
Exhibition Touring Pack

# **Making a Masterpiece:** Graham Sutherland's Christ in Glory



## Making a Masterpiece: Graham Sutherland's Christ in Glory

Graham Sutherland is one of the most significant British artists of the 20th century. His body of work includes etchings and drawings, posters, portraits and book illustrations. He is probably best known for his imaginative landscape paintings, many of which were inspired by the Welsh countryside and especially Pembrokeshire.

Sutherland was an official war artist in the Second World War painting scenes of bomb devastation and work in mines and foundries. He later moved onto religious subjects and was commissioned to paint the Crucifixion for St Matthew's Church in Northampton.

This exhibition explores the creative process undertaken by Sutherland to design the monumental tapestry which hangs behind the altar of Coventry Cathedral, and tells the story of the challenges and triumphs he faced in the creation of his masterpiece. The cathedral, designed by Sir Basil Spence and consecrated by the Queen in 1962, is an icon of modern British design and Sutherland's tapestry is one of its most stunning features. The exhibition showcases the Herbert's collection of studies made by Sutherland for the tapestry design.

**There are four sections in the exhibition:**

**Building the New Cathedral** explores Basil Spence's vision for the new cathedral.

**The Commission** looks at the concept for the tapestry and why Sutherland was chosen to execute it.

**The Design Process** examines in detail the evolution of Sutherland's design for the tapestry against the background of his dealings with the cathedral authorities.

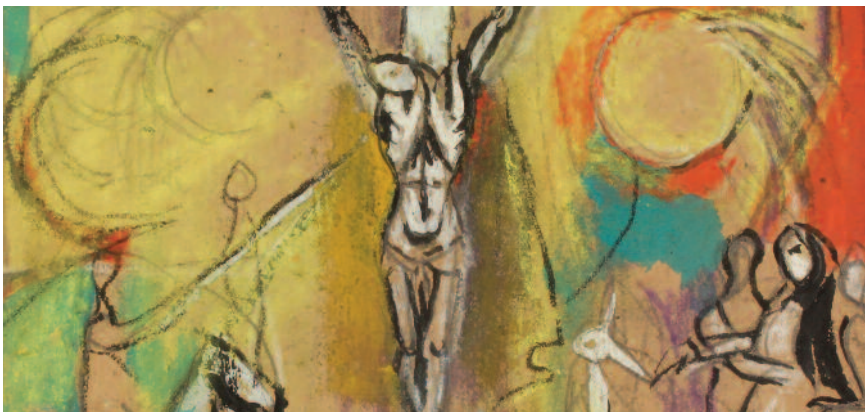
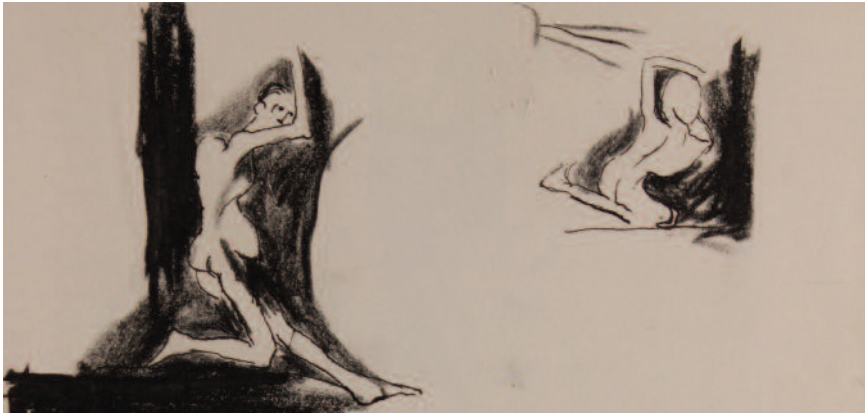
**Weaving the Tapestry** looks at how Sutherland's final design was translated into the largest single woven tapestry in the world.



*Pieta*, 1952-1958, Graham Sutherland, (Gouache)



## A Selection of Graham Sutherland's Studies





## Building the New Cathedral

On the night of 14 November 1940, Coventry was heavily bombed by the German Air Force. Much of the city centre was destroyed and over 500 people lost their lives. The medieval Cathedral of St Michael was hit by incendiary bombs and caught fire. By the morning only the spire and the exterior walls of the cathedral remained.

This section looks at how a new cathedral rose from the ashes of the old. It shows how Basil Spence won the open competition to design the new cathedral, and outlines Spence's vision for a simple interior which would be adorned with works by some of the leading contemporary artists of the day.



The Rebirth of Coventry Cathedral  
1957, British Railway Poster



## The Commission

This section looks at why Sutherland was chosen for the commission and the brief that he was given by the cathedral authorities.

Graham Sutherland had converted to Catholicism in 1926, and after the Second World War, during which he worked as an official war artist, he became increasingly concerned with religious subjects. Spence chose Sutherland after seeing the Crucifixion which he painted for the transept of St Matthew's Church in Northampton in 1946.

The cathedral authorities gave Sutherland a specific brief for the tapestry. The subject was to be Christ the Redeemer, in the glory of the Father, shedding His Spirit upon the Church. Sutherland faced many challenges in this project including meeting the approval of the cathedral authorities and making the tapestry fit with the overall design of the cathedral.



*3 Drawings of a Lion 1952-1958,*  
Graham Sutherland  
(Drawing)

*Crucifixion with Figures 1952-1958,*  
Graham Sutherland  
(Gouache)

## The Design Process

This is the largest section of the exhibition and traces in detail how Sutherland's ideas developed over a period of several years. It features up to 42 of the studies, and the first two cartoons he produced which show the overall design of the tapestry to the cathedral authorities.

Changes made by Basil Spence to the positioning of the tapestry and to the shape and colour scheme of the interior of the cathedral affected Sutherland's design. He also had to respond to the comments from the Cathedral Reconstruction Committee. At a late stage further changes were made during the weaving process.

The studies illustrate how key sections of the tapestry changed and developed, including the central figure of Christ and the emblems of the four Evangelists – the lion of St Mark, the eagle of St John, the calf of St Luke and the man representing St Matthew.



*Study for the Calf of St. Luke, 1952-1958,  
Graham Sutherland, (Gouache)*



*Drawing of a Calf, 1952-1958,  
Graham Sutherland, (Gouache)*



*St. Michael Wrestling With Satan, 1952-1958,  
Graham Sutherland, (Drawing)*



## Weaving the Tapestry

This section looks at how Sutherland's final design was converted into the woven tapestry by the French firm of Pinton Frères and the controversy surrounding the installation of the tapestry in the cathedral.

The contract for weaving the tapestry was awarded to Pinton Frères in 1958. Sutherland's final cartoon was sent to France and a full scale photographic enlargement of the cartoon was made which the weavers could use as a pattern.

At this point disagreements between Spence and Sutherland about the installation of the tapestry intensified. Sutherland wanted to see the finished tapestry hung in France so that he could make any final adjustments. Spence and the cathedral authorities however insisted on it being hung for the first time in the cathedral. By the time the tapestry was installed in the cathedral in 1962, the collaboration between Spence and Sutherland had come to a bitter end.



*Final Trial Piece*, 1958, Graham Sutherland (Tapestry)



## Further Information

**Making a Masterpiece: Graham Sutherland's Christ in Glory** is curated by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

The core of this exhibition explores the development of Graham Sutherland's design for the tapestry, which is illustrated by a significant number of the detailed studies he made and his first two cartoons for the overall design. Up to 42 of the studies are available and the number can be tailored to the size of the venue. Venues could choose to focus on certain elements of the design, eg the animals or the figure of Christ, which are each represented by a number studies.

Also available to appropriate venues is the full scale section of the tapestry featuring the eagle of St John, which was made by the weavers as a final trial piece. This is a large scale piece, measuring 2.95 metres high x 1.98 metres wide and comes with its own purpose-built case, which measures 3 metres x 2.11 metres.



*Annunciation*, 1952-1958, Graham Sutherland, (Gouache)



# Hire Information

## Content

The exhibition consists mainly of wall based works in a variety of media. All wall mounted items are framed and fitted with mirror plates, making them ready to hang. Text panels and labels for each work are also supplied.

## Size

The space required for the full exhibition is 62 linear metres. The works can be double hung to provide more flexibility. The number of works included can be tailored to suit the hiring venue in consultation with the Herbert.

## Security and environment

The hiring venue is required to have 24-hour security including constant invigilation of the exhibition during open hours. Appropriate temperature and humidity controls are required. Light levels must also be kept to appropriate levels as most of the works are in pencil, ink, chalk and gouache on paper.

## Hire fee

The hire fee is available upon request and will vary depending on the length of the hire period.

## Insurance

The hiring venue is responsible for insuring the exhibition including insurance while the exhibition is in transit. The hiring venue will be required to carry out condition checks at installation and de-installation.

## Transport

The hiring venue is responsible for packing and onward transport arrangements and cost. The cost will be £1500 + VAT for travel within the UK.

## Press and marketing

Images, credits and logos will be supplied by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum.

## Availability

The exhibition is available from September 2014

## Contact

If you are interested in showing this exhibition or would like any further information, please contact:

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