

Fine Art Collector (print)

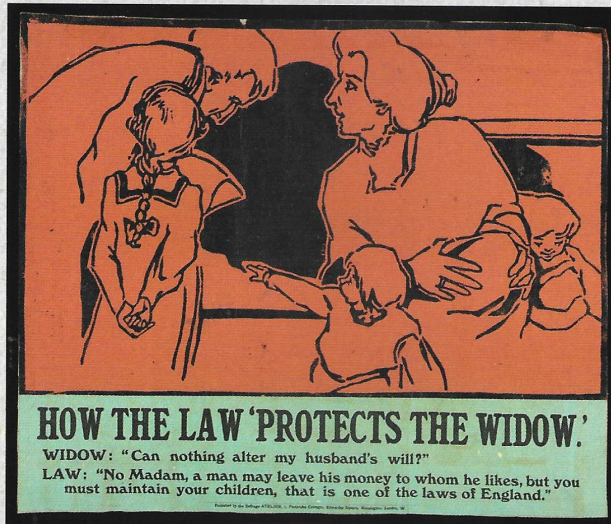
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# #100YEARS OF FEMALE POSTER ART



This year marks a century since women were given the right to vote for the first time. No longer willing to be shackled by their sex, women fought for equality with the most powerful tool of all: art. And we haven't stopped since.

How the Law 'Protects the Widow' [1909], Cambridge University Library  
 This woodcut was produced by the Suffrage Atelier, founded in 1909. The Atelier's designs were not posters, but wood blocks printed by the artist themselves.

In 1910, a brown paper parcel arrived at Cambridge University Library.

Inside was a selection of posters created by the suffragettes – members of the most powerful women's movement in history. The sender was a certain Dr Marion Phillips; a leading figure of the suffrage movement and Women's Labour League.

The thin sheets of paper belied

their startling message. 'Our weapon is public opinion', they stated against a backdrop of opposition and ridicule. With print production central to much of the ground campaign, the suffragettes had to convincingly paint an argument that would win the hearts and minds of the nation.

"The movement adopted techniques from the tabloid press," explains lecturer in modern British history, Dr

Lucy Delap. "Using great big headlines and foregrounding visual material – whether photos or cartoons."

Working on much of the imagery was the Suffrage Atelier and the Artists' Suffrage League; networks of professional artists and ordinary men and women who produced postcards and ceramics to be distributed and sold in suffrage shops across the country.



As the war for emancipation raged on, women were also forging a name for themselves in the world of professional poster art, particularly for the London Underground.

The first known poster by a woman to appear on the transport network was 'Kew Gardens by Tram' by Ella Coates in 1910. Over the next eight years – whilst women were still unable to vote or stand for Parliament – female artists sketched a creative world outside of the limited

opportunities of book and magazine illustration.

Adorning the platforms of the London Underground, the posters were viewed by the men in suits who commuted to work each day. Unlike suffragette posters – which could be defaced or torn down by opponents – they remained just as much a part of the tapestry of economic activity as the nondescript briefcases and trains that passed by.

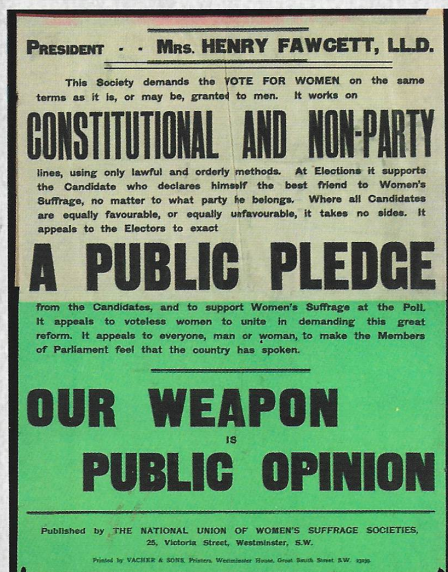
From cartoons to paintings

and illustrations, women's art was showcased rather than hidden, albeit under the pseudonym of initials or an advertising agency (Ella herself simply signed her work with 'Coates').

The importance of celebrating female art and the artists has been highlighted in recent months. Along with exhibitions at Cambridge University Library and the London Transport Museum, the Women's Library at the London School of Economics

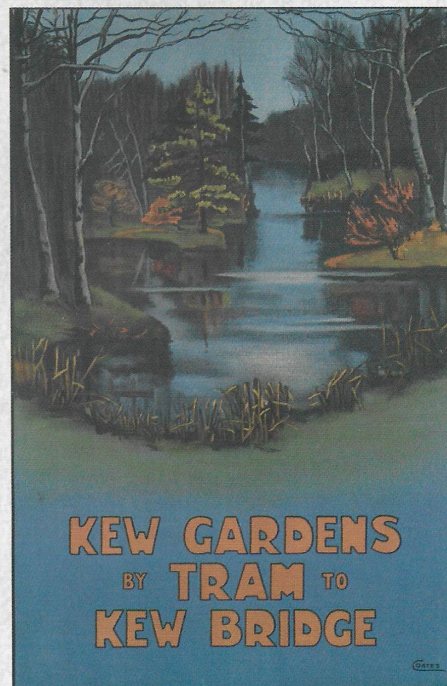
**"I LOVE TO BE CREATIVE AS IT SETS MY MIND, HEART AND SOUL FREE EVEN THOUGH MY PHYSICAL BODY IS IMPRISONED."**

ARTIST, HM PRISON LOW NEWTON



National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, [date unknown], Cambridge University Library. Produced by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, this poster uses colour to reinforce the aims of the movement.

Kew Gardens by Tram, Ella Coates [1910] © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection.







will showcase pieces later this spring.

Running alongside the exhibitions is Vote 100: a four-year parliamentary project to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918. It is important to note that, until this date, women – like convicts – had no parliamentary rights. Those who opposed this inequality, such as suffragette Mary Leigh, could in turn become convicts themselves.

In honour of those who gave up their freedom for others, the prison arts charity the Koestler Trust has committed to exhibiting 100 framed paintings, drawings, sculptures and poems by

women in prison in important venues and public buildings throughout the UK.

Chair of the Koestler Trust, Dame Anne Owers, says: "Many of those who fought for women's suffrage themselves experienced prison, and so it's appropriate that the art trail showcases the achievements of women now in prison."

A century on from women winning the right to vote, women are fighting very different battles, but the power of art lives on. As one of the artists from HM Prison Low Newton explains: "I love to be creative as it sets my mind, heart and soul free even though my physical body is imprisoned."

Monkey Lady, HM Prison Peterborough, Koestler Awards 2017

### POSTER GIRLS

London Transport Museum  
Until January 2019

Shining a spotlight on 20th and 21st century female graphic designers over the last 100 years, this exhibition unearths forgotten design heroines and reveals their hidden stories.

### 100 YEARS ON

The Koestler Trust (various locations)

From 1st March 2018

The prison arts charity will be exhibiting paintings, drawings, sculptures and poems by women in prison in important venues and public buildings across the UK.

### #VOTE100 SUFFRAGE POSTERS

Cambridge University Library

Until March 31st 2018

For the first time ever, the library will be displaying rediscovered suffrage posters from their collection. Follow the exhibition on Twitter with the hashtag #utArtofSuffrage.

### AT LAST! VOTES FOR WOMEN

The Women's Library at LSE  
23rd April – 31st August 2018

To mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act, the library will present suffrage banners, artefacts and archives from the three main suffrage groups.



