COURTAULD GALLERY

Press Release: Thursday 5 November

COURTAULD GALLERY TO PRESENT FIRST EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO PAULA REGO'S GROUNDBREAKING PASTEL SERIES, *DOG WOMAN*

Exhibition opens at the Courtauld Gallery on 5 February 2027



Paula Rego (1935-2022), Scavengers, 1994, pastel on canvas. Private Collection © Paula Rego Estate, courtesy Victoria Miro

To download press images: https://tinyurl.com/paula-rego-courtauld-2027

The Courtauld will present the first retrospective exhibition dedicated to Paula Rego's (1935 – 2022) groundbreaking *Dog Woman* series, bringing together fifteen of her earliest pastels for the first time since they were created over 30 years ago. The exhibition will reassess the significance of this body of work, which revolutionised the way in which women were represented and cemented Rego's reputation as one of the most radical artists of our time.

Among the artist's most striking, sensual, and unsettling works, the *Dog Woman* series was created between 1994–95 and was the first Rego made using pastel, the medium she became renowned for. The exhibition will feature fifteen such large-scale pastels depicting women with animal feelings and qualities, their isolated presence enhanced by the tight compositions and fields of colour suggestive of barren landscapes and interior settings. Also included is a remarkably prescient drawing from 1953, later titled *Dog Woman*, in which the 18-year-old artist first drew a woman crouching and snarling, along with a selection of preparatory drawings

More than any other body of work, the *Dog Woman* series became synonymous with Rego's unique, uncompromising portrayal of the physicality and power of female figures. She said the strength of these works came from channelling her own raw, undiluted feelings, squatting and posing in front of a mirror, *'turning myself into an animal'*. She stated, '*In these pictures every woman's a dog woman, not downtrodden but powerful. To be bestial is good*.'

Equally, Rego recognised the psychological depth and restlessness of these figures. She described the works as love stories, portraying the complex and contradictory emotions of desire, longing, rage, and submission, explaining that all of the dog women are 'a*bout survival of the great humiliations of life. Which the animal parts help to conquer'. Rego's* exploration of the animal within the human charted new territories and catapulted her into the most prolific and critically acclaimed period of her life.

In the late 1980s, after a hiatus of 30 years, Rego returned to life drawing. In 1994, after moving to a new, larger studio in Camden Town, London, where she could explore larger, more ambitious projects, Rego began working with pastel for the first time, a medium she went on to privilege for the rest of her career. Combining the attributes of painting and drawing, pastel was well suited to an artist known for her extraordinary command of line who considered herself a 'drawer' rather than a painter. Rego said: '*With pastel you don't have the brush between you and the surface. Your hand is making the picture. It's almost like being a sculptor. You are actually making the person. It's very tactile.'*

Rego first presented fourteen *Dog Woman* pastels in the exhibition *Paula Rego: Dog Woman 1994* at the Marlborough Gallery, London, extending and completing the series the following year. Rego always felt that works in her series gained from being seen together, with the breath and richness of their stories unfolding one picture at a time. This exhibition will be a unique opportunity to survey an unprecedented number of *Dog Woman* pastels primarily held in private collections in the UK, Europe and the United States, alongside loans from Tate, London, and Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Three of the pastels in the show, *Watcher*, *1953* and *Kennel* (all 1994), have not been exhibited in the UK since 1994.

The *Dog Woman* was the first series for which Lila Nunes posed, going on to become Rego's most frequent model and close collaborator. *Paula Rego: Dog Woman* will include the remarkable *Grooming* (1994), *Scavengers* (1994), *Bad Dog* (1994) and *Sit* (1995), among other pictures featuring Nunes. The exhibition will also include the four pastels for which two other models posed: the actresses Victoria Willing, Rego's daughter, in *Moth* (1994), *Bride* (1994) and *Love* (1995), and Flaminia Cinque, in *Lush* (1994).

Alongside the exhibition, ***Paula Rego: Pendle Witches*** will be on display in the Courtauld Gallery's Project Space, focusing on a suite of etchings and aquatint prints Rego made in 1996 inspired by poems of Blake Morrison (b. 1950). At the time of the making of the *Pendle Witches*, Rego and Morrison were close friends, as Morrison has said, 'because we were exploring similar issues in our work – grief, violence, misogyny, sexuality, the knowingness or otherwise of children'. Yet, far from being illustrations of Morrison's poems, Rego drew inspiration from them to create her own stories. The title relates to the notorious trial of the Pendle Witches in 1612 in Lancashire, which led to the execution of eight women and two men accused of witchcraft. Women are the protagonists of the *Pendle Witches* series. From

sexual awakening and sisterly companionship to the experience of violence and natural disaster, they imaginatively render a range of vicissitudes and hint at inner as much as outer turmoil.

Paula Rego: Dog Woman will be accompanied by a new illustrated catalogue that will reassess this unique group of works and the pivotal role it occupies in Rego's practice.

The exhibition is supported by The Paula Rego Exhibition Circle.

Paula Rego: Dog Woman
15 February – 23 May 2027
Denise Coates Exhibition Galleries, Floor 3
https://courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/exh-paula-rego-dog-woman/

Paula Rego: Pendle Witches
5 February – 23 May 2027
Project Space, Floor 2
https://courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/exh-paula-rego-pendle-witches/

Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN
Opening hours: 10:00 – 18:00 (last entry 17:15).
Temporary Exhibition tickets (including entry to our Permanent Collection and displays) from £18. Courtauld Members and 18s and under go free. Other concessions available.

Courtauld Members can enjoy the exhibition without the crowds at a preview on Thursday 4 February, 14:00 – 18:00, and also get free unlimited entry to all exhibitions, access to presale tickets, priority booking to selected events, advance notice of art history short courses, exclusive events, discounts and more. Join at courtauld.ac.uk/members

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Notes to Editors:

Courtauld
The Courtauld works to advance how we see and understand the visual arts, as an internationally renowned centre for the teaching and research of art history and a major public gallery. Founded by collectors and philanthropists in 1932, the organisation has been at the forefront of the study of art ever since through advanced research and conservation practice, innovative teaching, the renowned collection and inspiring exhibitions of its gallery, and engaging and accessible activities, education and events.

The Courtauld Gallery cares for one of the greatest art collections in the UK, presenting these works to the public at the Courtauld Gallery in central London, as well as through loans and partnerships. The Gallery is most famous for its iconic Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces – such as Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* and Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*. It showcases these alongside an internationally renowned collection of works from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance through to the present day.

Academically, the Courtauld Institute is the largest community of art historians and conservators in the UK, teaching and conducting research on subjects ranging from creativity in late Antiquity to contemporary digital art forms – with an increasingly global focus. An independent college of the University of London, the Courtauld offers a range of degree programmes from BA to PhD in the History of Art, curating, art and business and the conservation of easel and wall paintings. Its alumni are leaders and innovators in the arts, culture and business worlds, helping to shape the global agenda for the arts and creative industries.

Founded on the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to engage with art, the Courtauld works to increase understanding of the role of art throughout history, across all societies and geographies, and to champion its importance in the present day. This could be through exhibitions offering a chance to look closely at world-famous works; events bringing art history research to new audiences; accessible short courses; digital engagement, innovative school, family, and community programmes; or taking a formal qualification. The Courtauld's ambition is to transform access to art history education, ensuring as many people as possible can benefit from the tools it offers to better understand the visual world around us.

The Courtauld is an exempt charity and relies on generous philanthropic support to achieve its mission of advancing the understanding of the visual arts of the past and present across the world through advanced research, innovative teaching, inspiring exhibitions, programmes and collections. The collection cared for by the Courtauld Gallery is owned by the Samuel Courtauld Trust.