

Letters from the Home Front: The Alternative War Art of Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, 1940–1945

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Cumbrian Cosmopolitanisms: Li Yuan-chia and Friends

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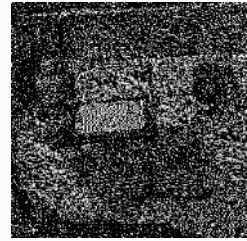
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Letters from the Home Front: The Alternative War Art of Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, 1940–1945

Article by **Sophie Hatchwell**

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Abstract

The Scottish artists Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde worked through the Second World War, but as they practised for the most part outside the patronage of the government's War Artists Advisory Committee, they are not typically situated amongst the pantheon of British war artists. However, a number of un-commissioned war paintings and the artists' personal correspondence from the early 1940s clearly position their practices as a direct response to the conflict. This article explores how MacBryde and Colquhoun's experience of life on the home front as non-combatants and erstwhile pacifists in Britain informed their work during the Second World War. It looks at the extent to which their pacifist stance impacted on their practice; how their personal experiences of war, as documented in their letters, may be brought to bear on an analysis of their painting; and, more broadly, what nuanced deviations in style and subject can be seen between commissioned and non-commissioned war art in Britain during the Second World War. It concludes by considering how their work that does not explicitly deal with conflict as subject matter may nevertheless be positioned within an inclusive canon of war art.

The material thrown up by this war is amazing and in these new forms I can see the foundations for a Renaissance in European art. A world of new synthetic materials borne out of necessity has arisen and while we cannot say that we are happy in this state of affairs yet it is with us and so we must state what we feel about it.

– Robert MacBryde, letter to the War Artists' Advisory Committee, 14 October 1940¹

This letter from the Scottish artist Robert MacBryde to the War Artists' Advisory Committee (WAAC), written at the height of the Second World War, is emblematic of the complex reaction that both he and his life partner, the artist Robert Colquhoun, had to the conflict. It signals not only their objection to the war but also their corresponding belief in the broader aesthetic opportunities it promised, and points towards a dichotomy between how these artists experienced and thought critically about war, and how this process of critique—and the effects of war more generally—engaged their aesthetic sensibilities. MacBryde wrote this letter while he sought a commission from the WAAC to work as an official war artist—a commission he never received. His partner Colquhoun had a similar experience and received only one commission in 1944 for

Weaving Army Cloth (fig. 1). For both artists, the majority of their work from 1940 to 1945 was made outside the state patronage system and, despite producing paintings that explicitly depict the conflict, they are rarely positioned within a historical canon of war art. MacBryde's statement, however, marks his practice, and by extension Colquhoun's, as a direct response to the conflict. This response, I argue, was predicated on a simultaneous objection to the war and a recognition of the opportunities it might afford for aesthetic inspiration—a "world of new synthetic materials".



Figure 1

Robert Colquhoun, *Weaving Army Cloth*, 1945, oil on canvas, 75.5 × 101.5 cm. Collection of the British Council (P149) Digital image courtesy of The British Council (all rights reserved)

MacBryde and Colquhoun's experiences on the home front as non-combatants and erstwhile pacifists influenced the art they made during the conflict. In light of their personal relationship and comparable professional practice, their work is typically considered in tandem; in this case, their shared experience of home-front life underpins the analogies that can be drawn between their work in the 1940s. This article is therefore concerned with the following lines of enquiry: to what extent do these artists' wartime practices indicate a pacifist stance; how might their personal experiences of war, as documented in their letters, be brought to bear on an analysis of their painting; and what nuanced deviations in style and subject can be seen between commissioned and non-commissioned Second World War art in Britain? Turning to Colquhoun's wartime landscape painting, the concluding section considers how art that does not explicitly reference conflict in its subject matter may be positioned within a broader canon of war art.

By shining a light on the practices and experiences of these two artists working outside the patronage of the WAAC, this article diverges from recent scholarship that focuses almost exclusively on art commissioned by the state during the Second World War in Britain, and beyond this, seeks to reconsider the boundaries and limitations of any canon constructed from this body of work.² In doing so, this article will chart how alternative narratives emerged beyond the official systems of patronage. By attending to these larger topical and methodological issues, this text contributes to a broader field of scholarship that aims, in the first instance, to widen the canon of war art, but ultimately, to call into question the usefulness of any canon in understanding artistic responses to conflict.³ Two alternative narratives are traced throughout this

article: first, the question of how art that does not explicitly depict conflict should be understood as a response to it, and thus recognised as war art; and second, how a moral conviction against war was registered in art not commissioned by the state that alternately depicted the devastation on the home front, and seemed to avoid reference to it entirely.

This article also offers a new analysis of Colquhoun and MacBryde's oeuvre by situating their early work within the context of war art aesthetics. Studies that cover the artists' early careers, notably those by Adrian Clark, Patrick Elliott, and Roger Bristow, have focused on their position within networks of private patronage in the wartime arts economy. More recent work has considered their sexual orientation in relation to their art practice.⁴ This scholarship is valuable, but a fresh approach to analysing their practice is much needed: despite Colquhoun and MacBryde's prominence and critical success in the British art world of the 1940s and 1950s, their work has, with the few exceptions named above, received little art-historical attention. Where they have been attended to, as Clark has shown, they have often been confined to the "artistic cul-de-sac" of Neo-Romanticism.⁵ In offering an alternative view of their work of the early 1940s, I do not propose to dislocate them from this context, but rather suggest a different perspective that de-prioritises their association with Neo-Romanticism and understands their work in relation to its particular moment of creation.

Wartime correspondence by MacBryde and Colquhoun, the majority of which has not yet been featured in published scholarship, is held in the archives of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.⁶ These letters provide an invaluable insight into the artists' immediate responses to their wartime situation. In addition to providing factual records of their activities, these letters also give a sense of their authors' fluctuating and complex personal reflections on the conflict—essential evidence that helps us understand the association between their experience and aesthetic responses to the war. Their correspondence, as the opening quotation indicates, provides a way to engage with their often introspective and disconnected wartime experiences as non-combatants and pacifists. Colquhoun was an unwilling conscript to the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), and was soon discharged; MacBryde was a conscientious objector who was rated unfit for service before a tribunal could be held. Their letters from this period frame a new reading of the art they made during the early 1940s, with reference to their joint critical outlook on the personal and cultural impacts of total war.

A Kind of Pacifism

In the midst of the war and then living in London, Colquhoun produced a small number of landscapes inspired by a trip to the Worcestershire countryside.⁷ In one of these works, *The Lock Gate*, two androgynous figures walk through a land of riotous foliage (fig. 2). They face away from the viewer and move towards a distant, otherworldly horizon.⁸ This work seems at first glance an escapist retreat into nature, a rejection of, or a turning away from, the upheaval, danger, and uncertainty of the conflict. However, given the context of its production—finished in the artist's studio in the middle of the war-torn city, and proximate to his completion of a number of war-themed paintings—the work raises a number of questions. What relationship exists between this artist's personal view and experience of war, and the process of image making? How is this complicated by his non-combatant status? What sort of connections can be drawn between conventional wartime imagery and potentially more diverse visualisations of the effects of conflict?



Figure 2

Robert Colquhoun, *The Lock Gate*, 1942, oil on canvas, 39.5 × 58.8 cm. Collection of Glasgow Museums (2936) Gifted by A.J. McNeill Reid, 1952
Digital image courtesy of the artist's estate, CSG CIC
Glasgow Museums Collection, and Bridgeman Images
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Throughout the early years of the conflict, both Colquhoun and MacBryde exchanged letters with their friend and former teacher Ian Fleming. These exchanges prior to and concurrent with the production of their early war paintings, including Colquhoun's *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter* (fig. 3) and MacBryde's *Ave Maria Lane* (fig. 4), provide a means to trace their early views on the conflict, particularly the impact of conscription, epitomised by MacBryde's assertion about his conscientious objection: "my task is bristling with difficulties but I know I can see it through on all points ... I am advocating what is right and just for all and to what lengths I would go to prove it."⁹ Bristow, in his biography of the artists, has been careful to acknowledge the effects of the war and conscription on the early stages of MacBryde and Colquhoun's careers, yet he deliberates about whether they should be considered pacifists. Instead, he tentatively suggests that they were only pacifists insofar as "the love of art that both ... passionately felt, was, in part an expression of a broader love of humanity. War for them was an awful and obscene rejection of this."¹⁰ At the same time, he argues that no clear ethical or religious motivation dictated their beliefs. I contend that while neither MacBryde nor Colquhoun makes explicit reference to pacifism in their correspondence, their letters nevertheless indicate a link between this "love of humanity" and their disavowal of conflict. It is my contention that this should be considered a kind of pacifism underwritten by their non-combatant status that saw them explicitly reject any active part in the military side of the war effort.



Figure 3

Robert Colquhoun, *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter*, 1941, oil on panel, 24.8 × 50.6 cm. Collection of the Imperial War Museum, London (Art.IWM ART 17211) Digital image courtesy of the artist's estate and Brigeman Images. Photo courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, London (all rights reserved)



Figure 4

Robert MacBryde, *Ave Maria Lane*, 1941, oil on canvas, 69 × 84.5 cm. Collection of Russell-Coats Art Gallery & Museum (BORG 01493) Digital image courtesy of Russell-Coats Art Gallery & Museum (all rights reserved)

The artists graduated from Glasgow School of Art in the years immediately preceding the war and Colquhoun received a travelling scholarship that took them both to Europe in 1938–1939.¹¹ This trip marks their earliest encounter with the coming conflict, as they witnessed troops amassing in Italy and Holland, and the construction of sea defences in The Hague.¹² Returning to Scotland in August 1939, their letters to Fleming turn to conscription and reveal MacBryde's determination to avoid active combat. They show how he registered initially as a conscientious objector, not to escape war service per se, but from fervent objection to violent conflict on moral grounds:

*[When] we are called for combat, then I shall get myself a tribunal to stand before. I cannot say I have any definite convictions and that I won't do anything in the war but—I will not kill. I will do anything else that in their anger at my decision they will give me to do, such as stretcher-bearer in the front line, but I won't kill. This is quite final.*¹³

In this period, MacBryde still imagined making some form of contribution to the war effort as a non-combatant, offering medical relief “help[ing] the wounded” on the front line with the army, or as a member of the Red Cross.¹⁴

Their move to the Ayrshire countryside in the early months of the war is emblematic of their attempted rejection of the conflict. Letters from this early wartime period revolve around the idea of war as an intrusion into the artists' way of life. When painting and drawing in the area around Maybole, MacBryde described their experience as a form of pastoral idyll, nevertheless punctuated with reminders of war. In August 1940, he wrote to Fleming, “our days are spent at the seaside watching convoys and bombers on the Firth, fishing, swimming, gifting drawings for the Red Cross ... along with other country pleasures.”¹⁵ Along with the imposition of the ubiquitous naval convoys, this idyll was inevitably disrupted by both bombing in Glasgow and Colquhoun's conscription.

When MacBryde eventually withdrew his objection in order to join Colquhoun, who had already been conscripted, it was on the condition that he would be drafted into the RAMC with him, and

would not be posted for combat. In the end, MacBryde was deemed unfit by the draft board due to health issues, but his correspondence roots his non-combatant status in a moral objection to violence, which can be understood as a kind of pacifism. It also reveals the extent to which even those opposed to the war were bound by the circumstances it dictated—MacBryde’s response to it was by necessity fluid and fluctuated as the war progressed and conditions changed rapidly. To an extent, this particular viewpoint aligns with a “quasi-pacifist” stance. Martin Ceadel, in his study of pacifism in Britain between the two world wars, identifies variations of pacifism (denoted by the two terms pacifism and pacifism), that range from an absolute pacifism centred on a complete disavowal of conflict to pacifism, which is characterised as a desire to prevent war while accepting its occasional necessity.¹⁶ One such variation is “quasi-pacifism”, to which he ascribes a “claim for special treatment on account of [the conscientious objector’s] particular characteristics as an individual”.¹⁷ In the case of MacBryde, the definition of “pacifist” comes from his moral rejection of violence, and the “quasi” nature of this from the implication that, as an artist, he makes a claim for holding “particular characteristics”, that is, artistic sensibilities that are incompatible with active combat. At the same time, MacBryde’s willingness to participate in the war effort in some capacity complicates this rather critical definition of pacifist practice.

Colquhoun’s letters reveal a similar yet more equivocal moral position on the conflict. While he never registered as a conscientious objector, his letters from 1941 detail the negative psychological and artistic impact it had on him: “the fear now of what seems almost inevitable defeat in [central Europe] has come down like a blight and I find it impossible to do any work.”¹⁸ Despite being conscripted into the RAMC, Colquhoun never saw active duty. Having been posted to training barracks near Edinburgh and then Leeds, he was eventually decommissioned as unfit for service due to the debilitating effect camp life had on his health.¹⁹ His correspondence shows that, while he claimed a lack of political awareness, like MacBryde, his main objection to combat centred on a concern for the war’s effect on people.²⁰ It was his own experience of unwilling conscription and the news of friends and relatives injured or killed that provoked him to lament “the utter wasteful curse of all this unnecessary warring”.²¹

Art and War

Following Colquhoun’s conscription, MacBryde spent time in Edinburgh and then in Leeds, in both locations petitioning for work as an official war artist, and in the latter witnessing Luftwaffe bombing. Rather than simply documenting an escapist ambition, MacBryde’s correspondence here shows that his moral opposition to the destructive effects of war was linked to a political understanding of the role painting could play in society. He was convinced that the task of the artist was to “record the horrors of modern warfare” and his frequent requests for war work from the Scottish Board, and subsequently the WAAC in England, should be understood in this context.²²

Through his contact in Edinburgh with Alexander Reid of the Reid and Lefevre dealer-gallery, MacBryde was inducted into an influential circle of artists and patrons. By spring 1941, he had moved to London where he witnessed the last months of the Blitz. Colquhoun followed a few months later and during their time in London both artists became conversant with WAAC commissioned work. They met prominent artists like Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore through their involvement in the social circle of the patron Peter Watson, and also, as their letters document, they visited a number of WAAC exhibitions.²³

By the middle of the war, both artists were active participants in the commercial art world, and their engagement with the war effort was realized predominantly through inclusion in exhibitions organised by the government-sponsored Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA).²⁴ Although their ethical objections to the war were less forcefully expressed in letters sent during this later period, MacBryde's earlier, more explicit confrontation with the moral issues of war as faced by artists—where he argued that painting was to be central to his contribution to the war effort, that it was “what I feel I can do best in this war”—should not be discounted.²⁵ For MacBryde, art was an important part of the nation's cultural life, and he argued for the crucial role art could play in rebuilding after the conflict and preserving culture while the conflict was in progress, defining himself to the WAAC's secretary O'Rourke Dickey as an artist “who must contribute to a real culture after the storm has passed and as the storm is raging”.²⁶ Colquhoun's letters reveal a similarly politicised conception of art in a time of war. While he asserted that he had no ambition to contribute to the war effort directly, Colquhoun did state that he felt a duty to produce art and experienced what he called a “conscience about painting”.²⁷ Problematised by his intermittently expressed belief that the conflict “gives the lie to almost everything the artist can do”, this “conscience about painting” can be read as motivation for his choice of subject matter in wartime work like *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter*, which centres on home-front life and critiques the impact of total war on society. This embrace of wartime subject matter, coupled with a rejection of war on a personal and political level, shows the duality inherent in Colquhoun and MacBryde's belief in the aesthetic opportunities afforded by the conflict, epitomised by the quotation at the head of this article. Much of their work before 1943 contains explicit representations of wartime subjects and shows the artists struggling with the contradictory drive to include implicit critique of the human cost of war while at the same time committing to an aesthetic and stylistic development seemingly inspired and motivated by the experience of total war.

Colquhoun's *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter* is an early example of his engagement with wartime subject matter and epitomises the duality I argue for in its blend of subject, critique, and aesthetic experimentation. This small painting depicts five figures in a compact, claustrophobic space. A woman reclines in a classical pose, while above and below her androgynous figures wrapped in blankets lie prone, and a man stands confrontationally to the left. The tight solidity of the composition, based on self-contained rectilinear planes, indicates the extent to which Colquhoun used this painting as a basis for compositional experimentation, with the formal arrangement and textured application of paint in grey–green–brown coarse planes evoking the physicality of stone and concrete, while nodding to contemporary modern abstraction, in work such as John Piper's. At the same time, the image offers a subtle critique of the wartime experience of sheltering. This is conveyed in formal terms, as each figure is contained within its own rectangular plane, thereby indicating a sense of isolation as well as claustrophobia. The subject of the painting, an air-raid shelter, is anchored by its title. The claustrophobic composition, and the incongruous collection of people in this low-ceilinged space, serves to emphasise the physical and social discomfort of the event and reflects Colquhoun's own experience of “the misery of shelters”.²⁸

Correspondence by Colquhoun and MacBryde contemporary to the production of this painting shows that this intertwining of moral critique and aesthetic experiment corresponds to their experience of London during the Blitz. While expressing their disgust at its destructive nature, they also recognised the formal inspiration it afforded them as artists. Living in the city from 1941 onwards, they experienced the final period of bombardment, which spanned nine months from September 1940 to May 1941, including fifty-seven nights of consecutive bombing from 7

September.²⁹ MacBryde, writing to Fleming in about 1941, conveys his feelings of pessimism and despair occasioned by the bombing: “I could not describe the chaos—it is far too fantastic, and I find a sickness of my soul developing this past week ... Ideas are going with everything else. Nothing but [surging?] hatred for the war fills me.”³⁰ This pessimism was fully realized with the bombing of their flat soon after:

*All our windows (and they cover the whole length of our flat) are in with two land mines round the corner. I don't know how we escaped yet I had the back of my hand cut a little, that was all. We drank a bottle of whisky and remained lying on the floor.*³¹

At the same time, their correspondence shows the extent to which the destruction inspired them too. Colquhoun, writing about seeing bomb damage shortly after his arrival in London in 1941, expressed his view of the scene in formal terms and revealed how the experience of the blitzed city stimulated his aesthetic interest:

*The destruction in the West End is incredible. Whole tracts of streets flattened out into a mess of rubble and bent iron. There is a miniature pyramid in Hyde Park not far from us built up of masonry and wreckage taken from bombed buildings. These heaps are all over London.*³²

This formal perception of flattened streets and repeated pyramids echoes MacBryde's statement about the “new forms” thrown up by the Blitz, a “world of synthetic materials”, inspiring increasingly formal and stylised responses to the war, like those seen in *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter*. Their correspondence from the early years of war reveals at once a sense of personal disgust and aesthetic inspiration, both of which I argue are drawn out and complicated in MacBryde and Colquhoun's depictions of the conflict. At the same time, their choice of subject matter at this stage begins to align with works commissioned by the government. Its degrees of similarity to or deviation from such works locate Colquhoun and MacBryde's paintings in relation to this established canon of war art, yet in a position that is still distinct from official work. This distinction, which will be explored below, ultimately centres on the artists' stylistic choices and their critical focus on the human cost of war.

Commissioned War Art and the War Artists' Advisory Committee

During the Second World War, the British government embraced the arts as something that “spoke to specifically British constituencies and by extension, promoted an inclusive national sensibility”.³³ State support for the production of art aimed to promote a sense of national unity through creative visual representations of contemporary life that could be used to propagate the notion of a strong national identity in need of preservation, giving the public a clear sense of “what we are fighting for” as a means to boost morale.³⁴ Further, exhibitions of such work could provide a cultural activity for a public whose access to leisure and luxuries was greatly restricted by the war. Government support for the arts rested in the hands of the WAAC, headed by Kenneth Clark and formed of like-minded civil servants and influential figures operating under the stewardship of the Ministry of Information. The Committee worked to recruit artists to paint wartime subjects and acquire war art for public exhibition in partnership with CEMA, the forerunner to the Arts Council.

This government scheme resulted in the production of a vast array of works recording all aspects of the war effort. Yet, as Brian Foss has demonstrated, due to the logistical difficulty of embedding artists within active units, and as a response to the direct effects of total war to which Britain was exposed on home soil, the home front became the primary subject matter for these commissions.³⁵ Subjects commissioned by the WAAC ranged from portraits of everyday citizens

taking part in the war effort, to views of factories involved in producing war materials or landscapes showing some sense of the fighting.³⁶ Nevertheless, images of the Blitz and its effect on the major cities dominated WAAC collections.³⁷ In this manner, the Committee reflected contemporary views about the centrality of the Blitz in the national consciousness during war time, so that by 1943 the writer Stephen Spender could claim that “by paintings of the war, we mean paintings of the Blitz”.³⁸

Early war work by Colquhoun and MacBryde, such as Colquhoun’s *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter*, and also MacBryde’s *Ave Maria Lane* and *The Courtyard or Basement Kitchen* (fig. 5), share the focus seen in commissioned works on the effects of the Blitz. Their motivations included the moral and aesthetic dimensions discussed above, as well as MacBryde’s ongoing efforts to lobby for government war art commissions. The issue at stake is the extent to which their early work aligns with or deviates from such commissioned work, and therefore where, as non-commissioned art, it fits in relation to canonical accounts of war art.

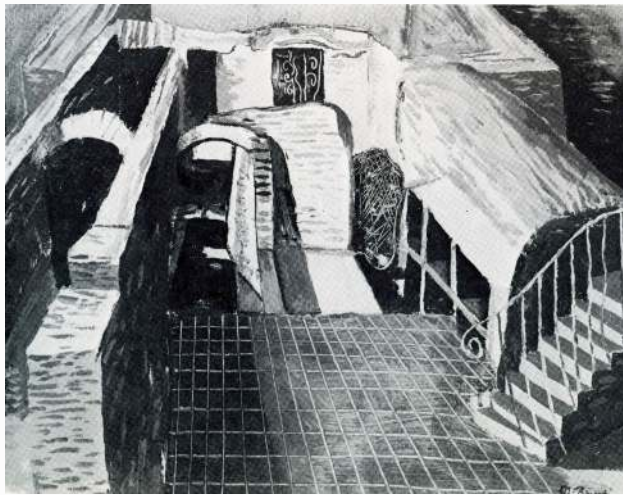


Figure 5

Robert MacBryde, *The Courtyard or The Basement Kitchen*, circa 1940, oil on canvas, 30.4 × 40.6 cm

In choosing a bomb shelter as his subject in *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter*, Colquhoun followed the approach established by commissioned artists such as Henry Moore and Edward Ardizzone, who each produced a major series of drawings on the same theme. In Elliott’s estimation, it is Moore’s tube shelter drawings that Colquhoun’s most resembles.³⁹ Colquhoun’s stylised depiction of human figures, with the torso of the standing male and the contrapposto recline of the women, hint at the classism that underpins Moore’s figures in drawings such as *Shelterers in the Tube* (fig. 6). Colquhoun’s figures also seem to reference the sculptural quality of Moore’s work—both in this quasi-classical forms and in terms of his limited colour palette and focus on surface texture. If this is the case, it is significant that Colquhoun was borrowing from and experimenting with the stylistic practices of other contemporary artists—who, it must not be forgotten, were commissioned war artists—in order to find a visual lexicon that could effectively represent his own subject.



Figure 6

Henry Moore, *Shelterers in the Tube*, 1941, graphite, ink, watercolour, and crayon on paper, 38 × 56.8 cm. Collection of Tate (N05712) Digital image courtesy of Tate (CC-BY-NC-ND (3.0 Unported))

Yet Colquhoun's work does not conform fully to the aims and ideals of the WAAC, who, as David Mellor has demonstrated, orientated their commissions around "popular legibility".⁴⁰ In this manner, commissioned art was required to be "legible to the 'average man'" in light of the public function it was meant to serve.⁴¹ The stylistic choices in Colquhoun's work do not sit easily in this category of "popular legibility". As previously demonstrated, the formal experimentation and emphasis on wartime suffering both present in *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter* mean that the image itself conveys a complex web of intentions. This is in direct contrast to the clarity of Ardizzone's shelter drawings (fig. 7), and is distinct from Moore's stylised interpretation of the tube shelter experience. Whereas Moore's drawings focus on organic softness and the fluid grouping and unification of figures, Colquhoun's abstraction of figures is angular, architectural, and tending towards formal isolation and alienation. While Moore's work has been described as monumental in a manner that indicates a unification of the individual with the group, an organic and sculptural homogenised whole, Colquhoun's figures are monumental in the opposite direction, with each figure monumental in its own right, compositionally detached and self-contained.⁴² His work therefore diverges from contemporary official treatments of the Blitz, which fostered what Angus Calder has termed the "myth of the Blitz" by emphasising communality and stoicism and omitting social discord or disorder.⁴³ In his depictions of isolated and alienated figures, Colquhoun undermines this notion of an idealised cooperative experience and instead reflects his own views on the "misery of sheltering", as part of the "unspeakable horror" he saw in the conflict.⁴⁴



Figure 7

Edward Ardizzone, *Shelter Scene*, 1941, lithograph.
British Council (M/CEMA 1) Digital image courtesy of
The British Council (all rights reserved)

Ironically, this divergence from established WAAC tropes can also be seen in his one painting commissioned by them, *Weaving Army Cloth*. This work resulted from a commission to paint the weaving industry of Scotland and its contribution to the war effort, a topic suggested by Colquhoun himself.⁴⁵ In style and subject, the work is very different from typical WAAC paintings. It comprises a semi-abstract depiction of two women sitting at a small table-sized loom and the military connection is far from evident; the title alone identifies it as war art. Instead of clearly signalling the conflict or war effort, Colquhoun focuses on formal experimentation realized by playing with scale and space. Preparatory drawings in the collection of the Imperial War Museum shows that this work was developed from observations of a factory. They detail large machinery that dwarfs workers who appear to be trapped in the mechanisms of industrial-sized looms, dehumanised through figurative abstraction (fig. 8). In the final painting, however, the machinery that loomed so large in the preparatory drawings has been reduced to a domestic scale and any clear reference to the war effort is removed. Instead, attention is refocused on the women weaving, foregrounding the human relationships caught up in the machine of war. In his more radical aesthetic approach, and his implicit critique of the war effort effected through negation of social cohesion, Colquhoun's work edges towards uncomfortable territory, and exists in tension with commissioned war art.



Figure 8

Robert Colquhoun, *Sketch for Weaving Army Cloth: Three Women Operating Machinery*, 1945, wash and wax crayon, 42.8 × 50.7 cm. Collection of the Imperial War Museum, London (Art.IWM ART LD 6136) Digital image courtesy of Imperial War Museum, London (all rights reserved)

Strategies of Displacement

This tension between the expectations of the WAAC as it commissioned work and the sort of paintings produced by artists who worked predominantly outside these official systems is further exemplified by MacBryde's blitzed cityscapes, such as *Ave Maria Lane* and *The Courtyard*. As with Colquhoun's *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter*, these works share some qualities with work commissioned by the WAAC, in that they depict the aftermath of the Blitz and in particular the destruction of buildings. Comparable subject matter can be found in the work of war artists such as Muirhead Bone, Graham Sutherland, and John Piper—all of whom influenced Colquhoun and MacBryde.⁴⁶ Yet MacBryde's focus on ruined buildings goes beyond the simple emulation of a contemporary trend. As Foss has argued, the predominance of ruins in work produced at this time is also rooted in a joint political and psychological imperative informing the visualisation of conflict, which he terms a "strategy of displacement".⁴⁷ Noting the great anxiety surrounding civilian casualties during the Blitz, Foss documents the extent of the political unease over civilian morale and the resultant media censorship in the wake of Luftwaffe bombing. In terms of commissioning art, while the WAAC did not engage in outright censorship, in line with government policy, it certainly privileged images that hid the extent of the human cost of the Blitz.⁴⁸

At the same time, visualisations of the war's destructive effects were conditioned by psychological responses to trauma. As historians Susannah Biernoff and Sue Malvern have argued in relation to the First World War, theories of trauma and disgust show how viewers are often unable to confront mortality and the abject nature of the corporeal body in injury and death.⁴⁹ In war art, injury and the loss of life are therefore frequently visualised metaphorically. In the case of the Blitz, this was achieved, as Foss argues, by painting ruins that could "act as a visual surrogate" for the human casualties, thus displacing bodily trauma onto architecture.⁵⁰ As

he has shown, this displacement centres on public and religious buildings in particular, as in works such as Piper's *All Saints Chapel, Bath* (1942) (fig. 9). Ruins could symbolise the spiritual and cultural attacks that Britain experienced and so foster a sense of national outrage, yet at the same time were unlikely to be inhabited and were therefore less likely to draw attention to any civilian loss of life.⁵¹ Interestingly, this phenomenon was also evident in corresponding painting in Germany, which featured what John-Paul Stonard refers to as “martyred architecture”.⁵²



Figure 9

John Piper, *All Saints Chapel, Bath*, 1942, ink, chalk, gouache, and watercolour on paper, 42.5 × 55.9 cm
Digital image courtesy of Tate (CC-BY-NC-ND (3.0 Unported))

In both *Ave Maria Lane* and *The Courtyard*, MacBryde engaged with a more radical depiction of the Blitz by focusing on domestic devastation. As with Sutherland's 1941 series depicting blitzed buildings in the East End, MacBryde's scenes of domestic destruction could stand for and allude to the loss of civilian life in a more direct manner than depictions of the Blitz that avoided domestic imagery. *Ave Maria Lane* follows some of the stylistic conventions of commissioned WAAC work in the way it achieves this, in particular sharing aesthetic similarities with the work of Sutherland and Piper in the use of textured paint and its compositional focus on a centralised architectural form. Thus we might see MacBryde's engagement with the work of Sutherland and Piper, like Colquhoun's with the work of Moore, as a search for an appropriate visual vocabulary. Foss shows how Sutherland's commissioned images were read as evoking the human body (“twisted girders having in them something of twisted humanity”), and how Piper's work was suggestive of “the physical pain of inflicted wounds”.⁵³ MacBryde's images work in a similar way, but stretch the anthropomorphic possibilities of architecture and go even further in their illusion to “inflicted wounds”.

Ave Maria Lane presents a scene of domestic ruins and rubble. The title, which may indicate both the street adjacent to St Paul's—a site of extensive bombing in December 1940—and the Christian prayer for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, hints in both cases at destruction and suffering. Following the principles of a “strategy of displacement”, the buildings, the broken walls, and twisted iron stand in for human limbs and broken bones. However, unlike work commissioned by the WAAC, this image alludes viscerally to the abject nature of the wounded human body, notably in its depiction of the ground. The architectural edifice forming the centre

of the composition emerges from or sinks into a flesh-like, permeable mass that is undulating and organic in form and blood-red in hue. In this painting, the earth thus becomes a reference to corporeal form and particularly the wounded and permeable body. This element bears comparison to Paul Nash's paintings from the First World War, in which churned earth was often seen by contemporary critics to represent literal bodies, in particular *We are Making a New World*, which features a similar undulating ground and comparable blood-red palette.⁵⁴ It is my contention that this stylistic link with landscapes of the First World War, which have likewise been read as suggestive of bodily injury and death, must inform our reading of the anthropomorphic qualities of MacBryde's work. In this vein, Sue Malvern's work on British representations of landscape in the wake of the First World War emphasises the extent to which this earlier conflict impacted on the representation of body, land, and their interrelation. She argues that through the war, landscape became associated with "anxiety about the fate" of fallen soldiers whose bodies were injured, dismembered, and "pulped and mingled with mud", thus "making the land as body more than a metaphor".⁵⁵ At the same time, she makes a claim for the ongoing impact of these new understandings of body and earth on British art in the inter-war period.⁵⁶ Similarly, in his analysis of depictions of heroism and the body in the Second World War, Foss makes a claim for the ongoing influence of systems of visual representation from the First World War into the Second World War.⁵⁷ Thus, it is possible to trace problems with visualising bodily destruction encountered during the Second World War back to traditions established in the First World War. Read through this lens, MacBryde's *Ave Maria Lane* is transgressive in its corporeality. Moving beyond the avoidance of "excessively explicit views of domestic loss" in commissioned art, it instead foregrounds the human cost of war through stylistic allusion to the permeable, fleshy body.⁵⁸

An Alternative Canon of War Art

My contention that unofficial depictions of conflict such as *Figures in an Air Raid Shelter* and *Ave Maria Lane* are in dialogue—rather than synonymous—with official works, necessitates a rethinking of the canonical boundaries of war art. This line of enquiry is made more complicated by the need to account for the work Colquhoun and MacBryde produced which did not attempt to visualise the conflict but was nevertheless concurrent with their work that did. The final section of this article therefore seeks to establish the relationship between Colquhoun's war painting and his parallel landscape practice in the early years of the war. My intention is to re-contextualise these landscapes within an appropriate historical context by bringing them into conversation with contemporaneous war art. The aim is twofold: to establish how art that does not explicitly depict conflict should be understood as a form of war art; and to consider how work that seems to avoid reference to conflict can register a sense of moral conviction against war.

The positioning of these landscapes in Colquhoun's oeuvre is problematic. They are tied closely to his war work in the context of their production—being contemporary with paintings such as MacBryde's *The Courtyard*—and sit alongside correspondence by the two artists that details the ongoing effect of the conflict on their practice. Yet in the absence of explicit wartime subject matter, their relationship to more overt war art is ambiguous. This is further complicated by their conventional art-historical categorisation as Neo-Romantic, a label that effectively severs these landscapes from the realities of the artists' wartime experiences by characterising them as "escapist".⁵⁹

This tendency to nullify the historical or political context of wartime work that does not explicitly visualise conflict is an issue that has hampered art-historical analyses of much modern British art produced during times of conflict and outside official systems of patronage. Similar issues are encountered, for example, in scholarship of art and pacifism in the First World War.⁶⁰ The issue of voicing dissent occupied vastly different political territory in the Second World War, removed from the fervent nationalism and the perilous position of pacifism in the earlier conflict.⁶¹ There was, however, still an expectation that depictions of the British Home Front in the Second World War would conform to and perpetuate certain acceptable socio-political paradigms.⁶² Queries about the political and moral responsibility of the arts are echoed in correspondence by MacBryde and Colquhoun, which suggests that despite the twenty-year gap and differing political climates between the wars, art's capacity to critique conflict was still up for debate.⁶³ Colquhoun and MacBryde's wartime practice bears witness to such debate by virtue of their non-combatant status, their quasi-pacifist beliefs, and their position outside official systems of employment.

So, how to interpret work made during war that does not explicitly depict wartime subject matter? In her analysis of the Bloomsbury artist Duncan Grant's work made during the First World War, Grace Brockington asserts that his very avoidance of visualising conflict allows his work to be read as an act of dissent.⁶⁴ Far from perpetuating the characterisation of Bloomsbury aesthetics as detached and disinterested, she instead posits that Grant's depictions of domestic interiors can be read as an aesthetic assertion of the pacifist political values that underpinned the Bloomsbury group's politics, and that this re-affirmation acts as a rejection of the dominant wartime values of militancy and nationalism.⁶⁵ In this way, the absence of wartime imagery becomes a mechanism by which to convey dissent in a manner that is nuanced, personal, errs towards critique, and that, crucially, does not necessitate explicit depictions of the war effort. This model provides a way into rethinking Colquhoun and MacBryde's practice by reconsidering not simply the relationship between their war art and official commissioned work, but also the relationship between their wider artistic practice during the war and their personal response to the conflict. This is epitomised, as shown, by their moral conviction to paint, and accompanying concern over the human cost of war demonstrated in their correspondence. Their experience as non-combatants provides further grist to the mill for this reinterpretation.

Neo-Romantic Escapism?

Any attempt to reframe Colquhoun and MacBryde's painting of the early 1940s in the context of war is complicated by its conventional association with Neo-Romanticism. This association is further weighted by the professional links between Colquhoun and MacBryde and other artists whose work is often described as neo-romantic, such as John Piper and Graham Sutherland. In his survey of the movement, *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and their Times*, Malcolm Yorke explored contemporary characterisations of the neo-romantic artists and concluded that they were conventionally seen as "escapists, fiddling in their studios while London burned around them".⁶⁶ His study of Colquhoun and MacBryde supports this characterisation, with Yorke arguing that once they failed to get a WAAC commission "these artists had turned their back on war".⁶⁷ Written before key archival material came to light (notably the artists' correspondence with Fleming), Yorke's analysis centres on their landscapes produced during the early 1940s, and demonstrates how works resulting from their 1941 trip to Worcestershire, such as *The Lock Gate* and Colquhoun's *Marrowfield, Worcester* (fig. 10), conform to a contemporary neo-romantic style. The former work in particular deals with what

David Mellor identifies as a central theme in neo-romantic art: the relationship between body and land.⁶⁸ He asserts that the pre-war landscape is synonymous with an idealised British past, an “idyllic space” akin to Eden “populated by transcendental, divine beings walking in a paradise Garden”.⁶⁹ With the commencement of war, he identifies a shift in the treatment of landscape and the body towards “a tender body, bombed, conscripted and exposed to an incremental technological violence” with landscape “expelled from the national fantasy of a Britain-as-Eden ... and displaced into a blitzed ruin”.⁷⁰ Bristow’s assessment of Colquhoun and MacBryde’s work broadly aligns with this characterisation, in which a neo-romantic “retreat into ruralism” — full of “typical” romantic subjects such as “war damaged building[s] and organic landscapes” — offered an “alternative view” to the “more realistic approach” of the WAAC.⁷¹



Figure 10

Robert Colquhoun, *Marrowfield, Worcester*, 1941, oil on canvas, 35.6 × 45.7 cm. Collection of Glasgow Museums (2461) Gifted by the Contemporary Art Society, 1944 Digital image courtesy of the artist's estate, CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, and Bridgeman Images (all rights reserved)

To some extent, the subject matter of *The Lock Gate* follows this neo-romantic preoccupation with body and land. Two figures — akin to Mellor’s “transcendental beings” — are embowered in the landscape, compositionally bound to it through their formal alignment with the surrounding plants. These share similarities with the figures in their colouring and in the presence of the linear threads that transverse both body and foliage. The desolate horizon, with the silver glow of the moon beyond the hills, hints at a dream-like state propagated by the landscape. This appeal to imaginative geography, along with the formal amalgamation of body and land, all make a case for this work’s inclusion in a neo-romantic canon. However, an exclusive alignment of their work with the imaginative and escapist qualities of Neo-Romanticism is problematic in the way it draws attention away from MacBryde and Colquhoun’s stated experiences of, and reflections on, the conflict, and effectively dislocates their paintings from the context of their production in the midst of war. It is also important to challenge the assumption that Colquhoun and MacBryde ignored the war after they failed to receive commissions, as both continued to draw on the war in their subject matter, and Colquhoun did eventually receive a commission in 1944 for *Weaving Army Cloth*. Neither does an exclusive neo-romantic characterisation account for the elements of their practice that do not conform to Mellor’s assessment of romantic “blitzed ruins” or Bristow’s

“retreat into ruralism”. Their work of the early 1940s therefore exists in relationship to, but is not fully aligned with, Neo-Romanticism, and in particular work by neo-romantic artists who received WAAC commissions. As such, their association with this movement may be read as an extension of their engagement with the stylistic lexicon of commissioned war art.

Allusions to Conflict

The Lock Gate, which was painted just after the end of the London Blitz, offers a compelling case study in how Colquhoun’s landscapes of the early 1940s can be placed into conversation with war art. As previously discussed, the artists had direct experience of the bombings in London and witnessed the devastation it visited on the city.⁷² Their three-week trip to Worcestershire in 1941, from which this work derives, appears to have been intended as a brief creative respite from the war-torn city. Colquhoun wrote enthusiastically on his return about having the opportunity to “paint the greenness of things”, in a letter that nevertheless went on to discuss Russia’s role in the war, and lament the conscription of his friend Sam Black.⁷³ Even in the Worcestershire countryside, the war was never far away. Rather than evidence of a wholehearted “retreat into ruralism”, brief forays into the country—facilitated by fellow artists and patrons—comprised part of the economic and social lifestyle of non-combatant artists working outside official systems of patronage. Resultant artworks, such as *The Lock Gate* and *Marrowfield, Worcester*, provide a means to chart the relative diversity of their activities under the challenging conditions of total war. Further, links between their war work and their landscape work are not only seen contextually, but are also evidenced in the materiality of the paintings themselves. The verso of *The Lock Gate* features a painting by MacBryde: a preparatory painting or alternative version of *The Courtyard*, the canvas presumably abandoned and reused by Colquhoun (fig. 11). War art is thus literally inscribed into *The Lock Gate*, in a manner that highlights the practical and intimate connection between the artists’ unofficial paintings of the conflict and their broader concurrent practice.



Figure 11

Robert MacBryde, *Preparatory Study for 'The Courtyard'*, circa 1941, oil on canvas, 39 × 58.4 cm. Painted on the verso to Robert Colquhoun, *The Lock Gate*, 1942, oil on canvas, 39.5 × 58.8 cm. Collection of Glasgow Museums (2936) Gifted by A.J. McNeill Reid, 1952 Digital image courtesy of the artist's estate, CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, and Bridgeman Images (all rights reserved)

The Lock Gate is also in stylistic conversation with commissioned war art. Useful comparisons can be made in this instance with Colquhoun's later commissioned piece, *Weaving Army Cloth*, and the work of Sutherland.⁷⁴ While Sutherland's practice was ostensibly centred on landscape, during the war, he was employed by the WAAC to paint images of the devastation of the Blitz in London's East End, resulting in paintings such as *Devastation 1941: An East End Street* (fig. 12).⁷⁵ Many of Sutherland's WAAC commissions were evidently informed by his landscape practice, and have since been read in varying ways as organic in their imagery. Depictions of natural forms in works such as *Green Tree Form: Interior of Woods* anthropomorphise objects in the landscape—in this case, a bipedal tree trunk, with humanoid limbs that “looks” up at us from the grass (fig. 13). He adapted this approach in his paintings of the Blitz, which, as discussed, anthropomorphise architectural forms. In *Devastation 1941*, Sutherland also transferred the colour palette of greens, browns, greys, and bright yellow from his landscapes and imposed an organic quality onto the ruined architecture. This evidently influenced contemporary readings of his works as metaphors for the human casualty of war.⁷⁶



Figure 12

Graham Sutherland, *Devastation, 1941: An East End Street*, 1941, crayon, gouache, ink, graphite, and watercolour on paper on hardboard, 64.8 × 110.4 cm Digital image courtesy of Tate (CC-BY-NC-ND (3.0 Unported))



Figure 13

Graham Sutherland, *Green Tree Form: Interior of Woods*, 1940, oil on canvas, 78.7 × 107.9cm. Collection of Tate (N05139) Digital image courtesy of Tate (all rights reserved)

Comparisons with Colquhoun's painting are evident in the use of shocking yellow and in the presence of anthropomorphic natural forms, which recur in the *The Lock Gate*, whose foliage possesses organic corporeal qualities. The colour scheme in this painting likewise serves to ally the organic elements of the landscape with the colour palette of the body—a reading supported by the deep-red colouring of the ground, which immediately invites comparison with the explicit corporeality of the flesh-like ground MacBryde imagined in *Ave Maria Lane*. This colour permeates the figures by tracing sinew-like across them; it may describe folds of fabric, yet at the same time might reference laceration. The foliage, following Sutherland's example, is depicted in an improbably bright nitrous or sulphurous yellow. This colour was later described by MacBryde as “a screaming yellow” and is reminiscent of iodine, used as antiseptic in bandages.⁷⁷ Given Colquhoun's work with the RAMC, there is a case to be made that such a yellow had a kind of unconscious resonance with human injury. The formal distortion of the landscape and figures, combined with the idiosyncratic colouring, likewise suggests a corporeal reading of this image.

Angular objects protrude unnaturally from the foliage, reminiscent of sinew, bone, and emerging joints. On the right of the composition, the trunk of a dead tree is suggestive of vertebrae and ribs; it carries an abrasion or wound on its side, which is coloured red and white and evocative of flesh, blood, and exposed bone.

Through such a reading, the organic, anthropomorphised landscape is suffused with the violence of war and the wounded human body. The close affinity between Colquhoun's stylistic choices for landscapes—as seen here in *The Lock Gate* — and his war art encourages a comparison beyond aesthetic style towards the use of organic analogies for the body as part of a strategy of displacement. This work, as it references the stylistic conventions of commissioned war art, presents the possibility of a metaphorical, anthropomorphic message comparable to the orthodox anthropomorphism of architecture in images of the Blitz. Following this, it becomes possible to see *The Lock Gate* as an image of similarly displaced destruction. Working outside of the official systems of patronage, Colquhoun is able to draw on official conventions in his work while retaining the freedom to introduce the human figure as subject in a more complex way than his commissioned contemporaries. Playing with this idea of “displacement”, his work departs from this basic principle by explicitly including figures and allusions to corporeal destruction.

Conclusion

Through comparative analysis with commissioned work, both Colquhoun and MacBryde's work can be read as a comment on war that diverges from official conventions. This is realised through their attempted negotiation of two core concerns: first, an interest in aesthetic experimentation and their belief that conditions of war, or a critique of war, would provide new opportunities for aesthetic development; and second, an accompanying deeply held and genuine concern for the human cost of war. This interpretation is enriched and supported by their correspondence, which reveals the artists' objection to the violence of war, epitomised by MacBryde's statement “I will not kill ... That is final”, and Colquhoun's “conscience about painting”. Through their letters, we get a sense of a fluctuating understanding of the political function of art in a time of war, which can be tied to their status as non-combatants. By contextualising their work within their belief that the artists' duty was to comment on the impact of conflict and to support artistic and cultural development, we might productively bring their practices into conversation with the aesthetic and political ambitions of commissioned war art. At the same time, such an approach paves the way for a fresh analysis of their broader contemporary practice, in which it is possible to chart the stylistic, practical, and ideological links between their war art and their wider practice.

Further work remains to be done, particularly on the gendering of the body in the artists' wartime work, and on their identification with a distinct Scottish identity. Yet this analysis of their early paintings goes some way towards challenging inherited interpretations of their work. In broader terms, it also begins to question the boundaries of canonical accounts of Second World War art in Britain. It offers an opportunity to chart alternative narratives in war art, in two ways in particular: first, by analysing the manner in which Second World War art can register forms of pacifist dissent; and second, by exploring how art work that does not explicitly represent the conflict can still be understood as war art. The result is to test the limitations of the canon of Second World War art and explore the diversity of experiences and viewpoints represented therein.

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About the author

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Footnotes

1. Correspondence between MacBryde, Colquhoun, and the WAAC, held in the Imperial War Museum Second World War Artists' Archive. ART/WA2/03/125 GP/55/95.
2. Examples include Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State, and Identity in Britain, 1939–45* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Art and the Second World War* (Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2013). Foss does make brief reference to Colquhoun's commissioned work but not the two Roberts' broader practice; see Foss, *War Paint*, 84–85.
3. It is in conversation with recent texts such as Catherine Speck, *Beyond the Battle Field: Women Artists and the Two World Wars* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014); Lucy D. Curzon, "Visualising the Home Front: Evelyn Dunbar and Wartime Citizenship", *Oxford Art Journal* 41, no. 3 (2018): 341–360; Grace Brockington, *Above the Battlefield: Modernism and the Peace Movement in Britain, 1900–1918* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
4. See Adrian Clarke, "Two British Art Patrons of the 1940s and 1950s, Sir Colin Anderson and Peter Watson", *The British Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 73–79; Roger Bristow, *The Last Bohemians: The Two Roberts, Colquhoun and MacBryde* (Bristol: Sansom Press, 2010), 201; Patrick Elliott, *The Two Roberts: Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2014); and Andrew Stephenson, "Arcadia and Soho", in Clare Barlow (ed.), *Queer British Art 1861–1967* (London: Tate, 2017), 133–137.
5. Adrian Clarke, "The Reputation and Achievement of Robert Colquhoun, a Reassessment", *The British Art Journal* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 75–83. Neo-Romantic surveys include: Malcolm Yorke, *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and their Times* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1988); David Mellor, *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain 1935–55* (London: Barbican, 1987); and *A Different Light: British Neo-Romanticism*, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, 10 June–24 September 2017.
6. Short quotations from some letters appear in Elliott, *The Two Roberts* and Bristow, *The Last Bohemians*, but many of those quoted in this article do not.

7. See Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 23.
8. Bristow, *The Last Bohemians*, 128.
9. Correspondence between MacBryde, Colquhoun, and Ian Fleming, held in the archives of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, GMA A21/4/25 MacBryde to Fleming, n.d.
10. Bristow, *The Last Bohemians*, 63.
11. Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 10–13; and Bristow, *The Last Bohemians*, 29–50. The award committee gave the travelling scholarship to Colquhoun with the awareness that he would also take MacBryde.
12. Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 13.
13. GMA A21/4/26 letter from MacBryde to Fleming, 9 September [1939]. By tribunal, he means army tribunal for conscientious objectors.
14. GMA A21/4/26 letter from MacBryde to Fleming, 9 September [1939]; and GMA A21/4/2 letter from MacBryde to Fleming, 14 June 1940.
15. GMA A21/4/6 MacBryde to Fleming, 6 August 1940. For Glasgow bombing, see GMA A21/4/3, 2 July 1940.
16. Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 4–5.
17. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, 9–10.
18. GMA A21/4/29 Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [late 1941]. A useful comparison might be made with the rejection of war by artists on personal and aesthetic grounds in the First World War. See Grace Brockington's discussion of Mark Gertler's response to conflict in *Above the Battlefield*, 97–98.
19. See GMA A21/4/23, letter from MacBryde to Fleming, n.d., and IWM GP/55/95 letter from MacBryde to Dickie, 19 November 1940.
20. GMA A21/4/12 Letter from Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [ca. 1942].
21. GMA A21/4/12 Letter from Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [ca. 1942]. Colquhoun gets "muddled" with politics, laments the deployment of his friend Sam Black. See also GMA A21/4/3 MacBryde to Fleming, 2 July 1940, which details that Colquhoun's brother had been wounded on active service.
22. GMA A21/4/2, 14 June 1940. IWM, ART/WA2/03/125 GP/55/95, MacBryde to WAAC, 30 October 1940; GMA A21/4/4, MacBryde to Fleming, 24 October 1940.
23. See Clark, "Two British Art Patrons of the 1940s and 1950s, Sir Colin Anderson and Peter Watson", 73–79; and GMA A21/4/8, A21/4/10, A21/4/11.
24. Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 27.
25. IWM, ART/WA2/03/125 GP/55/95, MacBryde to WAAC, 30 October 1940.
26. IWM, ART/WA2/03/125 GP/55/95, MacBryde to WAAC, 30 October 1940.
27. GMA A21/4/12, Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [1942?]. Colquhoun's moral obligation to paint was somewhat incongruously accompanied by his involvement with the Civil Defence Service, possibly driving ambulances, with whom he served following his move to London in 1941 until late in 1944, see IWM, GP/55/95 letter from Colquhoun to Kenneth Clark, 24 October 1944.
28. GMA A21/4/12, Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [1942?].
29. See Foss, *War Paint*, 33. For a popular socio-historical account of the Blitz, see Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: The British Under Attack* (London: Harper Press, 2010).
30. GMA A21/4/30 MacBryde to Fleming, 22 March [1942?].
31. GMA A21/4/30 MacBryde to Fleming, 22 March [1942?].

32. GMA A21/4/29 Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [late 1941].
33. Foss, *War Paint*, 3.
34. See Gardiner, *The Blitz*.
35. Foss, *War Paint*, 33.
36. For example, Laura Knight's depictions of women working in factories as in *Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring* (1943, Imperial War Museum), Paul Nash's *Battle of Britain* (1941, Imperial War Museum).
37. Foss, *War Paint*.
38. Spender, 1943 quoted in Foss, *War Paint*.
39. Elliott, *The Two Roberts*, 23.
40. David Mellor, "Second World War", in Chris Stephens and John-Paul Stonard (eds), *Kenneth Clark: Looking for Civilisation* (London: Tate, 2014), 101.
41. Mellor, "Second World War", 113.
42. For critical assessments of the monumentality and the homogenising quality of Moore's drawings, see Foss, *War Paint*, 76–77.
43. See Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991). It is not my intention to suggest that Moore's depiction of sheltering was uncritical, rather that, once under the auspices of the WAAC, his works were presented in a particular way that emphasised themes of stoicism and pathos, and minimised any critical reflection on the condition of the shelterers.
44. GMA A21/4/12, Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [1942?].
45. He originally asked to paint the weaving industry on the Western Isles, but the WAAC deemed this too obscure and sent him to a textile factory in Peebles instead. See IWM GP/55/95 letter from Kenneth Clark to Colquhoun, 6 November 1944.
46. For the influence of these artists on Colquhoun and MacBryde, see Bristow, *The Last Bohemians*; and Elliott, *The Two Roberts*.
47. Foss, *War Paint*, 41.
48. On the Ministry of Information's "soft censorship", see Foss, *War Paint*, 43.
49. See Sue Malvern, "War Tourisms: Englishness, Art and the First World War", *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no. 1 (2001): 44–66 and Susanna Biernoff, "Shame, Disgust and the Historiography of War", in C. Pajaczkowska and I. Ward (eds), *Shame and Sexuality: Psychoanalysis and Visual Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 217–236.
50. Foss, *War Paint*, 41.
51. Foss, *War Paint*, 44.
52. John-Paul Stonard, *Fault Lines: Art in Germany 1945–1955* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 61.
53. Foss, *War Paint*, 42. Foss is here referencing Stephen Spender and David Fraser Jenkins.
54. Malvern, "War Tourisms", 56 and 65. Malvern cites C.E. Montague's assessment in 1916 of *We are Making a New World* as evidence for this.
55. Malvern, "War Tourisms", 47.
56. Malvern, "War Tourisms", 60–61.
57. This is evident in his discussion of WAAC portraits of "typical citizens", Foss, *War Paint*, 64–65.
58. Foss, *War Paint*, 43.
59. See Yorke, *The Spirit of Place*, 22.

60. Brockington, *Above the Battlefield*, 1. This argument also has some synergy with art-historical studies of modernism and autonomy, such as that by Sara Blair, who argues that claims for the autonomy of modern art and its apoliticism nevertheless constitute a political position. Sara Blair, "Modernism and the Politics of Culture", in M. Levenson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 155–177.
61. For a detailed survey of art in the Great War, see Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).
62. Curzon, "Visualising the Home Front", 350. She focuses on the concept of good citizenship.
63. In addition to Colquhoun and MacBryde's correspondence, see, for example, John Rothenstein, "C.E.M.A. and Art", *The Spectator*, 16 September 1943, 260.
64. She discusses this in relation to his painting *Interior* (1918, Ulster Museum), Brockington, *Above the Battlefield*, 25–29.
65. Brockington, *Above the Battlefield*, 28–29.
66. Yorke, *The Spirit of Place*, 22.
67. Yorke, *The Spirit of Place*, 232.
68. Mellor, *A Paradise Lost*, 16.
69. Mellor, *A Paradise Lost*, 16.
70. Mellor, *A Paradise Lost*, 16.
71. Bristow, *The Last Bohemians*, 118 and 136.
72. See IWM, ART/WA2/03/125 GP/55/95, MacBryde to WAAC, 30 October 1940; GMA A21/4/4, MacBryde to Fleming, 24 October 1940.
73. GMA A21/4/12 Letter from Colquhoun to Fleming, n.d. [ca.1942].
74. This is underlined by the professional association between the artists: Colquhoun and MacBryde met Sutherland in London in 1940–1941; they were able to see Sutherland's work at the house of their patron Peter Watson in the early 1940s; and, by 1942, MacBryde was exhibiting his work in group shows that also featured Sutherland.
75. And later, rural industry in the south west.
76. See Mellor, "Second World War".
77. MacBryde, interviewed in "Scottish Painters", *Monitor* (BBC, 1959, Dir. Ken Russell).

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