

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

It is now a number of years since the Bowman Sculpture Gallery has held an exhibition solely focused on The New School of British Sculpture and it is a pleasure to see the Gallery again showing extensive examples of the leading artists involved.

The New British School, also referred to as the New Sculpture, followed a period when the Neo Classicism of such sculptors as Canova, Thorvaldsen and Gibson was regarded as the acme of their art and they featured in many of the great Houses of the time. Towards the end of the 19th Century the expanding middle class, who had a growing interest in the Arts, created a demand for smaller and more domestic sculpture began. At the same time painters such as Lord Leighton, who sculpted *Athlete Wrestling with a Python* and *The Sluggard*, and George Frederick Watts, who produced the great monument *Physical Energy*, were bringing 'colour' into the subject by varied patination and their treatment of shape. This movement was undoubtedly fuelled by a reaction against what was seen to be the severity of the Neo Classicists but the principal initiators of this 'New', most attractive and impressive period of British Sculpture, were Jules Dalou who taught at The South Kensington School of Art, for eight years from 1871, his friend Édouard Lantéri, who taught at The National Art Training College (later renamed The Royal College of Art) and Alfred Stevens. The result was, as one critic has said, '*a perfect synthesis of the spiritual and the sensual*'.

This approach to the subject was adopted by the 'New' sculptors. Not only by their use of form and patination but also, in some cases by the use of exotic materials such as ivory, lapis and precious stones, not to mention gilt and enamel. These sculptors numbered amongst their company those artists whose work is shown here, such as Sir George Frampton, Sir William Hamo Thornycroft, Herbert Hampton, Andrea Lucchesi, Sir Bertram Mackennal, Edward Onslow-Ford, Alfred Walker and, slightly later, by Francis Derwent Wood, Alfred Drury, Gilbert Bayes, Frederick Halnon, Sir William Reid Dick, Charles Ricketts, Albert Toft and other outstanding sculptors. The most celebrated of all was and is, of course, Sir Alfred Gilbert who was responsible for monumental works such as *Eros* and The Shaftesbury Memorial In Piccadilly Circus, the Clarence Tomb at Windsor, the Queen Alexandra Memorial outside St James' Palace and many other works, not to mention those of a more domestic size in this most welcome exhibition.

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