

# KEVIN SINNOTT HISTORY PAINTINGS

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**Private View Thursday 19 January, 6-8pm**

Flowers Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Kevin Sinnott, bringing to light formative historical events and stories located within the towns and valleys of South Wales. In this new body of work, Sinnott translates the grand themes of history painting into the narrative history of the small Welsh valley town of Pontycymmer and its surroundings, drawing attention to the distinguished characters and radical histories of the region.

Sinnott's interest in Pontycymmer's past began with the discovery of a locally published history of the Hippodrome, a venue established in a former skating rink at the turn of the twentieth century by a family of music hall entertainers called The Andersons.<sup>1</sup> Originally from London, they had spent a season in New York before mysteriously settling in the small Welsh town, drawing the budding music hall characters of the day from London to Wales. The painting *London, New York, Pontycymmer* provides an example of Sinnott's characteristic emphasis on painterliness, with passages of spontaneous brushwork exposing a vigorous use of line and dashes of colour. Here, the sombre hues of the industrial town are enlivened by glints of golden light radiating from the arriving performers onto the crowd.



*London, New York, Pontycymmer*, 2015, Oil on linen,  
177 x 220 cm, 69 3/4 x 86 5/8 in

In *1926 Miners' Lock Out*, the warm light bathing the parading figures appears to emanate from a red banner in support of the Communist party (depicting an image of Lenin and the message S.O.S.), rather than by the setting sun, which casts a long shadow over the valley town. The Miners' Lock-out of 1926 was a bitterly drawn-out dispute in defence of miners' wages and conditions, with many public demonstrations throughout South Wales. Sinnott represents the parade-like atmosphere with jazz bands and carnival floats, alongside imported symbols such as the banner, which would have been seen in the nearby village of Maerdy, known as Little Moscow. The history of mining in the locality, once one of the largest coal producing valleys in the world, is further explored in the painting *Rhondda Fawr*, which imagines an Arcadian day-off in the foreground against the realities of a harsh industrial way of life.

*Nina Boyle Walking into the Future* is one of a series of paintings representing the influence of significant cultural figures on the local area. Nina Boyle, then leader of the Women's Suffrage Movement, held two meetings at the Hippodrome, Pontycymmer in 1915 to bring knowledge of the history of the movement to the women of the town. The scumbled brushwork and fractured marks representing the rapid movements of her footsteps and the dog she holds on a chain can be seen to reflect the dynamism and progressive tempo of modern life, with echoes of the contemporaneous shifts between artistic movements from neo-impressionism to futurism.

*Richard Price* is a portrait of the moral philosopher and political pamphleteer, born at a farm called Tyn Ton in the village of Llangeinor, Glamorgan, Wales which can be seen represented in the left hand corner of the painting. Price (1723–1791) is known for his important contribution to the American War of Independence, through the fostering of political communication in his popular publications. Within the painting, fragments of his influential texts are interwoven with the responses of British politician and statesman, Edmund Burke (his chief opponent), against the backdrop of the unfolding American Revolution and the French Revolution. As Sinnott describes, "*Price spoke from the university of Radical Dissenters, sympathetic to the revolutions in both America and France. The debate between Price and Burke rumbled on for years and has been described as the most crucial ideological debate ever carried out in English.*"

In contrast, the story behind the portrait of Bunny Eddington, a local boxing legend in the 1930s, was discovered by Sinnott through local oral histories. The site of a historic boxing field in Pontycymmer where Bunny may have fought is now a barely detectable plateau on the east side of the valley, its stories submerged with the passing of time. In the painting named after the site, Sinnott reimagines the glories of past prizefights, and the pastoral pleasures of local people, gathering to witness the triumph or downfall of a local contender.

## ABOUT KEVIN SINNOTT

Born in Sarn, South Wales in 1947, Kevin Sinnott is a contemporary Welsh artist with a truly international reputation. He trained at Cardiff College of Art & Design, Gloucestershire College of Art & Design and at the Royal College of Art, London. Sinnott remained in London throughout the 1970s and 80s, exhibiting in London, the USA and mainland Europe, before returning to Wales in 1995, where he has established himself at the forefront of the renaissance in Welsh painting. While his work is primarily concerned with human relationships, the influence of the South Wales landscape is strongly felt in his paintings. He was elected to the Royal Cambrian Academy in 2007. His work is collected worldwide and he is represented in many important public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Museums and Galleries of Wales; National Library of Wales; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; British Museum; Arts Council of Great Britain; Royal College of Art, London; British Council; and Deutsche Bank AG, London amongst others. His large canvas *Running Away with the Hairdresser* has proved to be one of the National Museum and Galleries of Wales's most popular acquisitions.

1. Paul Howells, *The Ring, The History of Pontycymmer's Hippodrome and the Anderson Family*, Published in Wales, 2011.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

Exhibition Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes - [Hannah@flowersgallery.com](mailto:Hannah@flowersgallery.com) / 0207 920 7777

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Richard Price, 2015, Oil on linen,  
177 x 220 cm, 69 3/4 x 86 5/8 in



*The Boxing Field, Pontycymmer C1920*, 2014, Oil on linen,  
178 x 220 cm, 70 1/8 x 86 5/8 in



*1926 Miners' Lock-Out*, 2016, Oil on linen,  
177 x 220 cm, 69 3/4 x 86 5/8 in