

# Artist & Empire

25 November 2015 – 10 April 2016

Room 1

Mapping and Marking

Large Print Guide



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## Introduction

At its height the British Empire was the largest empire in history and the most influential global power. Originating with a few overseas possessions and trading posts, it grew to encompass dominions, colonies and protectorates ruled or administered by the United Kingdom. In 1922 the Empire covered almost a quarter of the world's total land area; by the end of the century it had diminished to just a few overseas territories. During this contraction, 'Empire' became a highly provocative term. Its history of war, conquest and appropriation is difficult, even painful, to address but its legacy is everywhere: not just in public monuments, but in social structures, culture and in the fault lines of contemporary global politics.

**Artist and Empire** looks at the British Empire through the prism of art and explores some of the ways in which Empire has shaped practices and themes in British art from the early colonial period to the present day. Focusing on works in British collections by a diverse range of artists from across the world, the exhibition illustrates the complicated histories embodied by objects, inviting us to consider how their status and meaning change over time. In reflecting imperial narratives and post-colonial re-evaluations, it foregrounds the peoples, dramas and tragedies of Empire and their resonance in art today.

# 1 Mapping and Marking

Charting, mapping and surveying oceans, coasts, land and resources were essential tools of Empire. Part of a wider gathering of information by the West about the world, they defined sea and trade routes, and identified territory to be claimed and colonised. Following earlier Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch navigators, buccaneering Elizabethan mariners and the 'discovery voyages' of James Cook and Matthew Flinders accompanied by 'scientific gentlemen' laid the foundations of a British Empire focused on maritime trade and the exploitation of regional resources. Trading 'factories' and forts built by the East India Company grew into great cities, their surroundings and hinterland surveyed by military engineers. Maps were made for settlers, builders of roads and railways, defence and warfare.

Using their own skills and technical inventiveness, British cartographers and surveyors also learned from colonial rivals and regional expertise. Their work sometimes involved collaboration, but was often suspect, resented or opposed. By erasing indigenous ownership and imposing new names and borders, Empire maps were always provocative and ultimately redundant. At the height of Empire, maps defined Britain's global reach, ambition and power in pictorial terms or by appearing in patriotic pictures.

Work captions and labels

Anti-clockwise from left of wall text

John Thomas 16th century

## **The Siege of Enniskillen Castle**

1593

Watercolour on paper

England's first colony, Ireland was invaded by Anglo-Normans in the 12th century. Their influence never reached the far north-west. Under Elizabeth I, settlement began in earnest, with Ulster divided into counties under English law. In 1593, Hugh Maguire, lord of Fermanagh, became the first Gaelic chieftain to rebel.

John Thomas, an English 'Soldier', shows English forces laying siege to the Maguire fortress at Enniskillen. Map, picture and propaganda combined, his drawing illustrated the dangers of defying the English Crown. In fact, the Maguires retook the castle, only losing it again after a Nine Years War.

The British Library. X53586

Wenceslaus Hollar 1607–1677

## **Tangier from the Sea**

### **The Settlement at Whitby**

1669

Pen and ink with watercolour on paper

In 1668, Prague-born Wenceslaus Hollar accompanied a British expedition to Tangier which was part of the dowry of Charles II's Portuguese bride, Catherine of Braganza. Here the artist made drawings for publication as engravings. These two works document the methods used by the settlers to fortify and domesticate what must have been for them an unfamiliar terrain. The North African forts and village are given English place names while the muted tones and gently receding hills are suggestive of an English landscape. The outpost was abandoned in 1684 and the settlements destroyed.

The British Museum, London. X53208, X53207

Henry Popple d.1743

**Map of the British Empire in North America with the French and Spanish and Dutch Settlements Adjacent Thereto**

1733

Coloured line engraving on paper

Popple was employed in the Board of Trade and Plantations, responsible for the colonies. His map shows British colonies in North America in relation to those of European powers, and Native American territory. Rather than made for a commercial market, it was intended for government and colonial administrators.

While their achievements made it redundant, founding fathers of independent America including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams admired or owned examples of Popple's map. A copy was hanging in Pennsylvania's State House when the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776.

James and Emma Gleave. X57573

Nicholas Pocock 1741–1821

**A View of the Jason Privateer**

c.1760

Pen and ink and wash on paper

Britain was one of the major forces driving the European traffic in slaves during the 18th century, and Bristol a key port for what was termed the 'Africa' or 'Triangular' trade between Britain, West Africa and the Caribbean. This drawing by the mariner turned marine painter Nicholas Pocock details a transaction in the sale of slaves who are shown being herded onto a boat for transit to the **Jason**, thence to be transported across the Atlantic to work on plantations in the Caribbean. The drawing was likely to have been based on first-hand experience and is devoid of feeling or censure.

Bristol Museums and Art Gallery. X52843

John Montresor 1736–1799

**Plan of the City of New York and its Environs to Greenwich  
on the North or Hudsons River and to Crown Point on the  
Sound or East River**

1766

Ink and wash on paper

From a family of military engineers, Montresor became Chief Engineer in America before the revolution. He made this plan and defensive survey of New York and what is now Lower Manhattan for Thomas Gage, British Commander-in-Chief in North America, as the general prepared to confront rebel colonists in the winter of 1775–6. Montresor had to work 'Sub Rosa as observations might endanger one's house and effects if not one's life'.

Trustees of the Firle Estate Settlement, Sussex. X52774

Mark Wood 1750–1829

**Survey of the Country on the Banks of the Hughly from Manicolly Point to Chitpore including the Post at Manicolly, Fort William and the Town of Calcutta**

1785

Ink and watercolour on paper

Wood joined the East India Company's Corps of Engineers in Bengal, becoming Surveyor-General (1786) and Chief Engineer (1788). He drew some of the earliest maps and surveys of Calcutta (now Kolkata) and the Hooghly river. This one, recording tidal soundings, was made for the Company's Commander-in-Chief, General Sloper, for 'Military Information'. The fast-growing city, still surrounded by swampy jungle, is seen to the right, above Fort William and the Maidan, ground kept clear as an open field of fire in case of attack and today the city's main park.

The British Library. X53585

British School

**Thomas Cavendish, Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins**

17th century

Oil paint on canvas

With a globe indicating their epic voyages, this portrait shows three celebrated mariners of Elizabethan England: Sir Francis Drake (centre), the first Englishman and only the second sailor to circumnavigate the earth; his cousin Sir John Hawkins (left); and Thomas Cavendish (right).

The careers of these adventurers and privateers included ruthless harassment of Spanish shipping, contributions to early colonialism and helping to develop the slave trade. At the same time, they placed England at the forefront of marine exploration, becoming national heroes through narratives like Richard Hakluyt's **Principall Navigations** (1598).

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London,  
Greenwich Hospital Collection. X52725

George Lambert c.1700–1765  
and Samuel Scott c.1702–1772

## **Bombay**

1731

Oil paint on canvas

The East India Company began in 1600 as a trading firm but grew to control much of India with its own civil service, army, navy (the 'Bombay Marine') and merchant fleet. Its territories passed to the Crown in 1858 and it was finally dissolved in 1874.

Bombay (now Mumbai) had previously been a Crown colony, acquired by Charles II in 1661 with the dowry of his Portuguese bride. The Company leased it and built a warehouse (seen here with Company ships) in 1668. This picture belongs to a series depicting the Company's coastal trading posts, painted for its London headquarters.

The British Library. X53583

Matthew Flinders 1774–1814

**General Chart of Terra Australis... Showing the Parts Explored Between 1798 and 1803**

1804

Ink on paper

Flinders circumnavigated Australia (then known to Europeans as New Holland) for the British Admiralty in 1801–3. He drew a chart of the coast of the continent in 1804, while detained on Ile de France (now Mauritius) by the French administration that suspected him of spying. Gaps remain along the western coast but the shape of the continent is apparent. Flinders names it 'Australia', the first usage of the word on a map. The name was officially adopted by the Admiralty in 1824.

The National Archives. X52780

Tupaia 1725–1770

## **Sketch Map of the Society Islands**

1769

Ink on paper

This map of part of Polynesia was made by the politician, Tupaia, after he joined Captain Cook's boat at Tahiti. Polynesians were sophisticated in long-distance navigation and had around 1000 islands across the Pacific Ocean, including Aotearoa (New Zealand) for which Cook was bound. The Polynesian map identifies existing place names and populations of the islands, often unknown or unacknowledged by British map-makers.

The British Library. X53587

Leslie MacDonald Gill 1884–1947  
**Cable & Wireless Great Circle Map**  
1946  
Published by Edward Stanford Ltd.  
Lithograph

This 360 degree London-centric image is a decorated version of a working map used by engineers to plot the direction of wireless beams. All 150 or so circuits radiated from the capital. The map's inscription 'Mark your Cables Via Imperial' shows that it was designed to play on patriotic feelings. It was replaced by 'Britain the World Centre' in later reprints, notably in the 1950s when the British Empire had given way to the Commonwealth.

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). X53577

George Philip and Son Ltd.

**Navy League Map of the British Empire**

c.1922

Paper mounted on linen

The British Navy League was an extra-parliamentary pressure group formed in 1894. Its goal was to convince the public that the strength of the Empire relied on its fleet. It produced large propagandist school maps such as this one to remind pupils of the extent of the British Empire and its economic worth.

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). X53576

Walter Crane 1845–1915

**Imperial Federation: Map Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886**

Published by Maclure & Co. as a supplement to **The Graphic**,  
24 July 1886

Colour lithograph

This map was published to mark the Colonial and Indian Exhibition which took place in London in 1886. It accompanied an essay on imperial federation as an alternative to colonial imperialism which the author, Captain JCR Colomb, felt was impossible to sustain given the pace of expansion. (Had the map been published ten years later, a much greater proportion of Africa would have been tinted pink.) Crane, the designer, was a declared Socialist and used the border decoration which ostensibly celebrates Empire to emphasise unequal distribution of wealth among its subjects.

Daniel Crouch Rare Books. X58267

James Brandard 1812–1863

**Ikmallik and Apelagliu, Interviewed aboard Victory**

1835

Lithograph on paper

This print was published to illustrate a 'Narrative' by John Ross of his voyage in search of an Arctic North-West Passage, 1829–30. It shows two of the Inuits who visited his ship while she was ice-bound in Lord Mayor Bay, Boothia Peninsular. During the visit, they drew maps for Ross, to share their local knowledge.

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). X53580

John Everett Millais 1829–1896

## **The North-West Passage**

**'It might be done, and England should do it.'**

1874

Oil paint on canvas

The title of Millais's picture takes its name from the map in the centre. This connotes the dense network of islands along the north coast of Canada and the waterways between them connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Successive expeditions to chart a passage through to Asia had resulted in failure, hence the painting's overriding theme of resolve arising from past experience. A young woman reads passages from a logbook to an elderly man whose steely expression and clenched fist encapsulate the sentiment expressed in the title.

Tate. Presented by Sir Henry Tate 1894. N01509

Conservation supported by Tate Patrons 2015

Augustus Earle 1793–1838

**Life in the Ocean Representing the Usual Occupations of the  
Young Officers in the Steerage of a British Frigate at Sea  
Exhibited 1837**

Oil paint on canvas

Born in London, Earle travelled to America, Brazil, India, Australia and New Zealand, becoming familiar with shipboard life. Here midshipmen, officers and sailors are off-duty below decks, reading, drawing, playing with exotic pets or drinking, under the watchful eye of red-coated marines. Navigational instruments including a sextant lie to hand. Earle exhibited the picture with a companion piece, representing divine service at sea.

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London X52643

Fante Artists, Gold Coast, Africa

## **Selection of Asafo Flags**

c.1900–40

Cotton

These flags were made by the Fante people of the African Gold Coast, which became a British Protectorate at the turn of the 20th century and independent Ghana in 1957. They were first made as insignia for militia companies, the Asafo, who were Britain's allies and intermediaries. They combined regional folklore and imagery with colonial and industrial infrastructure, with variants of the Union flag superimposed. As pressure for independence grew, the flags became or were seen as subversive. Many were banned or destroyed by the colonial government.

Peter Adler Collection

X55843–4, X56347-8, X56360, X57331–5

## Showcase

Diogo Homem c.1520 – after 1575

### **The Queen Mary Atlas**

1541

Ink and watercolour on paper

Mapping and charting skills developed in Portugal and Spain before they reached England. The son of a leading Portuguese mapmaker, Homem was welcomed in London for his geographical knowledge. This world map is part of an atlas made for Queen Mary I as a gift for her husband Philip II of Spain. It includes coastlines previously reached by Iberian navigators and colonists.

The British Library

X53584