William Hogarth, A Rake’s Progress, plate 3 (detail), 1735. © Gerald Coke Handel Foundation.
William Hogarth (1697-1764) is often described as an ‘artist’s artist’. Since his artistic heyday in the mid-eighteenth century his work and his manner of working have inspired generations of creative people. A Rake’s Progress, Hogarth’s series of eight paintings (now in the Sir John Soane’s Museum), and subsequent etchings have provided a particularly rich resource for artists. The work’s heady combination of youth, money, lust and the city, coupled with Hogarth’s expert graphic technique, his precise storytelling, his wit, and unrelenting social critique, have kept this modern moral tale vivid and meaningful. From the moralising Victorian painter William Powell Frith, to the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, to the American poet WH Auden, Hogarth’s Rake has provided a fertile feeding ground for artists working in many fields. On the 250th anniversary of his death, Hogarth’s work remains as relevant and inspirational as it was in 1735 when the etchings were first published. This exhibition focuses on visual artists and presents contemporary responses to the work by three major British artists: David Hockney, Grayson Perry and Yinka Shonibare MBE. A new work from Jessie Brennan has been specially commissioned for the exhibition.
William Hogarth, an active Governor of the Foundling Hospital, was a painter, engraver and entrepreneur who was passionate about the rights of artists and about promoting British talent. He burst onto London’s artistic scene in the first half of the eighteenth century, creating a new form of narrative painting with his modern moral tales. Published as a set of engravings in 1735, *A Rake’s Progress* follows the rise and fall of young heir and spendthrift Tom Rakewell. On inheriting his miserly father’s fortune, Tom embraces a world of foppery and pretension, descending into a spiral of debauchery and debt, which leads him to prison and eventually, the madhouse. The series is an unflinching portrayal of the corruption, hypocrisy, vice and occasional virtue of eighteenth-century London, presented with Hogarth’s typical wit and eye for detail.

**WILLIAM HOGARTH**

*A Rake’s Progress*, 1735
Engraving
The Garrick Club, London

William Hogarth, *A Rake’s Progress*, plate 6 (detail), 1735. © Gerald Coke Handel Foundation

**FIRST FLOOR**

**Plate 1: The Heir**
Having received his inheritance, Tom is being measured for a new suit of clothes. He attempts to pay off his sweetheart, Sarah Young, whose bulging stomach and the ring she holds show that Tom has seduced her with the promise of marriage.

**Plate 2: The Levée**
Aping the manners of the aristocracy, Tom is holding court at a morning levée. Assorted visitors proffer their trades, including a dancing master, a landscape gardener and a fencing master. Hogarth mocks Tom’s attempts to acquire taste through money.

**Plate 3: The Tavern**
In Covent Garden’s Rose Tavern Tom is slumped in a drunken stupor. While one prostitute steals his watch, another is undressing. She is about to perform an erotic routine on the reflective platter carried by the porter.

**Plate 4: The Arrest**
Tom is heavily in debt and, on the way to a party at St James’ Palace on Queen Caroline’s birthday, he is arrested. Sarah Young, now working as a milliner, steps in to save him.

**Plate 5: The Marriage**
Having spent his first fortune, Tom is acquiring a second by marrying a rich old woman. The ceremony takes place in the shabby interior of St Marylebone’s Church, known for holding clandestine weddings. In the background Sarah, now holding her child, is prevented from entering.

**Plate 6: The Gambling Den**
Set in White’s Club, Soho, Tom has now gambled away his second fortune. Kneeling on the floor, cursing his luck, Tom and the other gamblers – who include a highwayman, a clergyman and an aristocrat – are oblivious to the fact that the room is on fire; a prophecy of Tom’s downfall.

**Plate 7: The Prison**
Incarcerated in the Fleet Prison for debtors, Tom shows the first signs of mental illness. The rejected script of a play he has written lies on the floor. His wife scolds him as Sarah, her child pulling at her skirts, faints at the desperation of the scene before her.

**Plate 8: Bedlam**
Tom has descended into madness and is now in Bethlehem Hospital, known as ‘Bedlam’. Surrounded by other delusional figures and robbed of his dignity, he is nursed by the ever-faithful Sarah and observed by two fashionable ladies. Visiting the Hospital was a popular pursuit in Georgian London.
The Vanity of Small Differences is a series of six tapestries charting the journey of Perry’s protagonist Tim Rakewell. Perry follows Hogarth’s structure of a progress, using the tapestries as a means to explore issues and ideas of class and taste in Britain today. Inspired by the people, incidents, places and objects Perry discovered while making his Channel Four documentary series All in the Best Possible Taste, Perry literally and metaphorically weaves them into his narrative. In addition to taking inspiration from Hogarth’s A Rake’s Progress, Perry’s tapestries include Biblical references and compositional devices borrowed from religious paintings.

1. The Adoration of the Cage Fighters
2. The Agony in the Car Park

Focusing on ‘working class taste’, these tapestries are inspired by Perry’s visit to Sunderland and reference a car rally, a night out at ‘Heppies’ social club and the local homes he visited. The first is set in ‘granny’s front room’. Tim is depicted as a baby, held by his young mother whose words ‘I could have gone to Uni…’ begin the story. In the second, Tim covers his ears as a nightclub singer belts out an emotional ballad. Behind, the crane alludes to the nostalgia felt for the heavy industry that once bound the town together, while all around are examples of ‘working class’ pastimes from allotments to accessorising cars.

3. The Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close
4. The Anunciation of the Virgin Deal

Moving between what Perry calls ‘two tribes of middle class taste’, Tim turns his back on the modern utopia offered by King’s Hill, a pristine housing estate, where carefully selected aspirational products help residents assert their middle class credentials. Instead, Tim and his girlfriend move in with the second tribe – where cultural capital sits at the heart of taste and taste asserts an individual’s authenticity. In tapestry 4, the scene is full of the trappings of ‘middle class’ taste, Perry’s epitome of which, the cafetière, takes centre stage. The tablet on the table shows that Tim, now a father, has sold his company to Virgin for a fortune.

5. The Upper Class at Bay
6. Lamentation

Tim has joined the upper classes. In tapestry 5 the upper classes are under attack, torn apart by the dogs of inheritance tax, social change and fuel bills. Tim and his wife’s enjoyment of their mansion is marred by protestors demanding he pay sufficient tax. As in Hogarth’s work, tapestry 6 sees the Rake’s demise. While showing off his Ferrari to his new wife Amber (as the pages of Hello magazine relate) Tim has crashed the car. Like Hogarth’s hero, Tim lies stripped of his dignity, as well as his life, surrounded by the trappings of a mega-rich celebrity lifestyle. In the background onlookers tweet the carnage – their Twitter hashtag referenced in the title.

2003 Turner Prize-winner Grayson Perry (b. 1960) works with traditional media such as ceramics and tapestry and is interested in how each category of object accrues intellectual and emotional baggage over time. Perry delivered the BBC Reith lectures in 2013, a year after his critically acclaimed Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman exhibition at the British Museum. He is the Foundling Museum’s 2010 Hogarth Foundling Fellow.


‘I love the way his [Hogarth’s] paintings of eighteenth century life galvanise every detail, every gesture, every costume, into a portrait of a class, a place, and a time.’

Grayson Perry

In 2014, Jessie Brennan was commissioned by the Foundling Museum to make a new work in response to Hogarth’s A Rake’s Progress. A Fall of Ordinariness and Light explores progress as a concept in the context of urban gentrification within one of London’s most economically deprived boroughs, Tower Hamlets. Brennan’s work features a section of the estate at Robin Hood Gardens, designed by architects Peter and Alison Smithson in the late 1960s. The council estate was part of the ‘streets in the sky’ architectural style, which saw unmodernised terraced houses replaced with high rise blocks. Robin Hood Gardens was envisioned as a model of progressive social housing, yet it will soon be levelled as part of a regeneration programme to make way for a larger, high-density housing scheme. Its current, mostly low-income, tenants face an uncertain future.

By graphically depicting the gradual crushing of a photograph of the estate, Brennan anticipates the forthcoming demolition. Her series of four pencil drawings questions whether the physical destruction of a building represents the failure of the ideal it represents, and makes the viewer contemplate the shifting definition of progress. Has the utopian ideal of community housing been replaced with an improved or worsened ideology?

Like Hogarth, Brennan is inspired by London’s urban landscape and interested in its ability to provide a dramatic context in which to critique social change. However, unlike Hogarth’s Progress, the figure remains absent in Brennan’s work, although she includes traces of human habitation such as washing on a line. The four titles mimic key phrases from the regeneration project’s compulsory purchase order issued by Tower Hamlets, juxtaposing the project’s positive language with images of downfall.

From left to right:
1: The Order Land
2: The Scheme
3: The Enabling Power
4: The Justification

Jessie Brennan (b. 1982) is an artist who works in printmaking, drawing and video. She is interested in the representation of existing and imagined places through drawing and dialogue. Brennan was runner up in the prestigious Jerwood Drawing Prize 2011 and was commissioned by Art on the Underground in 2012.

Jessie Brennan, A Fall of Ordinariness and Light, The Enabling Power (detail), 2014. ©The artist

‘A Rake’s Progress had (and still has) the ability to confront what people’s ideals of progress are.’

JESSIE BRENNAN

Ground Floor

Jessie Brennan

A Fall of Ordinariness and Light, 2014
Graphite on paper, framed in aluminium

In 2014, Jessie Brennan was commissioned by the Foundling Museum to make a new work in response to Hogarth’s A Rake’s Progress. A Fall of Ordinariness and Light explores progress as a concept in the context of urban gentrification within one of London’s most economically deprived boroughs, Tower Hamlets. Brennan’s work features a section of the estate at Robin Hood Gardens, designed by architects Peter and Alison Smithson in the late 1960s. The council estate was part of the ‘streets in the sky’ architectural style, which saw unmodernised terraced houses replaced with high rise blocks. Robin Hood Gardens was envisioned as a model of progressive social housing, yet it will soon be levelled as part of a regeneration programme to make way for a larger, high-density housing scheme. Its current, mostly low-income, tenants face an uncertain future.

By graphically depicting the gradual crushing of a photograph of the estate, Brennan anticipates the forthcoming demolition. Her series of four pencil drawings questions whether the physical destruction of a building represents the failure of the ideal it represents, and makes the viewer contemplate the shifting definition of progress. Has the utopian ideal of community housing been replaced with an improved or worsened ideology?

Like Hogarth, Brennan is inspired by London’s urban landscape and interested in its ability to provide a dramatic context in which to critique social change. However, unlike Hogarth’s Progress, the figure remains absent in Brennan’s work, although she includes traces of human habitation such as washing on a line. The four titles mimic key phrases from the regeneration project’s compulsory purchase order issued by Tower Hamlets, juxtaposing the project’s positive language with images of downfall.

From left to right:
1: The Order Land
2: The Scheme
3: The Enabling Power
4: The Justification

Jessie Brennan (b. 1982) is an artist who works in printmaking, drawing and video. She is interested in the representation of existing and imagined places through drawing and dialogue. Brennan was runner up in the prestigious Jerwood Drawing Prize 2011 and was commissioned by Art on the Underground in 2012.

Jessie Brennan, A Fall of Ordinariness and Light, The Enabling Power (detail), 2014. ©The artist

‘A Rake’s Progress had (and still has) the ability to confront what people’s ideals of progress are.’

JESSIE BRENNAN
YINKA SHONIBARE MBE

Diary of a Victorian Dandy, 1998, printed 2012
C-type prints
Victoria and Albert Museum. Purchased with the support of the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Photographs Acquisition Group

Diary of a Victorian Dandy was commissioned by Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) in 1998. The first of the five works was displayed as a large poster at 100 stations across the London Underground network, temporarily becoming a part of London’s cityscape.

Shonibare’s progress takes the form of five photographic tableaux. The series shows a day in the life of a fashionable, pretentious, flamboyant dandy, surrounded by fawning admirers and servants. From the Dandy’s leisurely wake up at 11:00 (referencing the Rake’s Levée) through the lavish soirée at 17:00 to the debauched 03:00 bedroom scene, the Dandy’s excesses become more evident as the day unfolds. However, unlike Hogarth, Shonibare does not moralise. He leaves his photographs purposefully ambiguous, without providing additional context or storyline.

In the eighteenth century black people were at the margins of society. In Hogarth’s etchings, they appear on the edge of the action, even while they comment on the behaviour of their ‘superiors’. In contrast, Shonibare places himself as the Dandy and in that identification, makes the Dandy an outsider, someone who uses his flamboyance and wit to penetrate the higher levels of society, yet never belongs. This references Hogarth’s Rake, who through his newfound wealth mimics but never belongs to the aristocratic classes. Shonibare also sets the narrative in the heyday of the British Empire, enabling him to play with notions of culture, identity and history, and explore the cultural legacy of colonialism, including the relationship between luxury goods and slavery. These tableaux were the result of an elaborate three-day shoot at a stately home in Hertfordshire, involving costume designers, actors and make-up artists. The result, Shonibare suggests, is ‘pure theatre’.

Clockwise from left as you enter the room from the staircase:
1. 11:00 hours
2. 14:00 hours
3. 17:00 hours
4. 19:00 hours
5. 03:00 hours

A Rake’s Progress continues to be relevant today. It should adorn the walls of every bank in the country as a precautionary tale.

YINKA SHONIBARE MBE

Yinka Shonibare MBE (b. 1962) is a British-Nigerian artist whose work explores questions of cultural identity. A Royal Academician and Turner Prize nominee, Shonibare’s Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle was commissioned for the Fourth Plinth in 2010. He is the Foundling Museum’s 2012 Hogarth Foundling Fellow.

David Hockney took up printmaking as a student for financial reasons (the printmaking department gave out free materials), but it proved a rewarding medium for him. His outstanding draughtsmanship translated well to the fluid process of etching on copperplate. A Rake’s Progress remains one of his most popular print series. Unlike Hogarth, Hockney did not reproduce his prints from a painting, but composed directly onto the plate, giving the prints an added directness. Both artists excel at storytelling through graphics, but Hockney pare down his images to storyline essentials.

His first visit to New York in 1961 inspired this semi-autobiographical progress, purposefully based on Hogarth’s Rake. Originally formed of eight prints, with titles to match Hogarth’s, the series was later expanded to sixteen. Hockney shares Hogarth’s focus on the intoxicating mixture of youth and freedom, now experienced by a young gay man tempted by a new city. Like Hogarth, Hockney’s Rake is shown in a specific time and place. His prints are full of references to contemporary consumer culture: the Rake arrives on a Flying Tyger aeroplane, he bleaches his hair with Lady Clairol in Plate 3. He also incorporates contemporary events such as the Kennedy/Nixon Presidential Election in Plate 5.

Mimicking Hogarth’s tale, the Rake receives his ‘inheritance’ in Plate 1a – Hockney had sold two prints to the Museum of Modern Art on arrival. The Rake initially embarks on a harmless tour of the sights including the Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument (Plate 2), before watching Mahalia Jackson, the civil rights activist and gospel singer, perform at Madison Square Gardens. The Rake’s descent begins from Plate 3 and his insecurities are drawn out in The 7 Stone Weakling (Plate 3a), as muscular runners pass by. In Plate 4 the Rake and a companion are seen outside a gay bar, referencing Hogarth’s tavern scene.

As the wallet begins to empty, the protagonist is enticed by alcohol. He experiences prison (albeit through watching a film of incarceration at a cinema) and witnesses death. Death in Harlem, based on a photograph by Cecil Beaton, is swiftly followed by the Rake’s final descent. In the last two prints, the figures wear transistor radios. When Hockney first saw people wearing those in New York, he thought they were hearing aids. In the final image, Bedlam, all figures wear identical outfits while listening to WABC radio station, symbolising Hockney’s personal vision of mental distress; the loss of individuality.

From top left on the main wall, all prints are numbered:

- Plate 1: The Arrival
- Plate 1a: Receiving the Inheritance
- Plate 2: Meeting the Good People (Washington)
- Plate 2a: The Gospel Singing (Good People) Madison Square Garden
- Plate 3: The Start of the Spending Spree and the Door Opening for a Blonde
- Plate 3a: The 7 Stone Weakling
- Plate 4: The Drinking Scene
- Plate 4a: Marries an Old Maid
- Plate 5: The Election Campaign (with Dark Message)
- Plate 5a: Viewing a Prison Scene
- Plate 6: Death in Harlem
- Plate 6a: The Wallet Begins to Empty
- Plate 7: Disintegration
- Plate 7a: Cast Aside
- Plate 8: Meeting the Other People
- Plate 8a: Bedlam

David Hockney (b. 1937), is one of the most popular and versatile British artists of the twentieth century, with an outstanding artistic output. He has worked as a painter, printmaker, photographer and stage designer. A Royal Academician, he has recently been awarded the Order of Merit.