



Emmy Bridgwater

*The Edge of Beyond*

THE MAYOR GALLERY

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Emmy Bridgwater :  
*The Edge of Beyond*

1 December 2022 -  
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## *Emmy Bridgwater : A Surrealist State of Mind*

By Ruth Millington

On 11 June 1936, the *International Surrealist Exhibition* opened in London. Huge crowds, lining the streets in anticipation, brought Piccadilly's traffic to a standstill. Once inside, visitors were both awed and baffled as Dylan Thomas offered around teacups of boiled string, Salvador Dalí delivered a lecture while wearing a full deep-sea diving suit, and Sheila Legge strutted through the show dressed as The Phantom of Sex Appeal, carrying a prosthetic leg. None was more impacted by this dramatic arrival of Surrealism in Britain than a 30-year-old artist and poet from Birmingham: Emma 'Emmy' Bridgwater.

Born in Edgbaston, Bridgwater began formal art education at the progressive Birmingham School of Art, which had a history of welcoming women artists: Georgie Gaskin, Kate Bunce and Kate Eadie, among others. Here, she was taught for three years by portrait artist Bernard Fleetwood-Walker, under whose instruction she became a skilled painter and draughtswoman. But it was the Surrealist exhibition that Bridgwater regarded as "quite a revelation", inspiring what she termed a "transformation" upon her artistic practice and career at the heart of this radical new movement.

At the 1936 exhibition, Bridgwater also crucially met fellow artists Conroy Maddox and John Melville, and the writer Robert Melville. These three men, all from her home city, were already committed to Surrealism, having discovered the movement one year earlier. Having found artistic allies, Bridgwater worked with them to establish the Birmingham Surrealist Group, which was later joined by the younger artists Oscar Mellor and Desmond Morris.

Bridgwater was a leading member of this ambitious circle of artists and writers, who would meet in the Kardomah Café on New Street, the Trocadero pub in Temple Street and, later, at Maddox's house in Balsall Heath, where legendary parties took place. Throughout the 1930s and 40s, they acted as a unified collective, organising lectures and debates, to which they also invited Birmingham-based academics and musicians, while working individually on their own Surrealist visions, each developing a unique style.

During this period, Bridgwater invoked the Surrealist principle of juxtaposing unusual objects to reveal uncanny narratives; in her paintings and ink drawings viewers are invited into interior worlds, defined by a symbolic language of birds, eggs and organic forms. Bridgwater's desire to delve into the darker recesses of the psyche was characteristic of the wider Birmingham Surrealist Group, who were intent on staying true to Surrealism's original aims, as established by André Breton, of uncovering the hidden corners of the mind, beyond all reason.

From the outset, these artists were distinguished by their opposition to a London-based vision of Surrealism, which they saw as inauthentic or even anti-Surrealist. "If London was trying to make a contribution, we were not interested", declared Robert Melville. Morris agreed: "We were truer to the ideals of the movement". Although Bridgwater had met Maddox and the Melville brothers at the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, rumour has it that they had refused to take part in it, believing that many of the participating artists were masquerading as surrealists for the sake of exposure. "No doubt it was possible to perceive Surrealist imagery in a lot of paintings, but that hardly made them Surrealist", sneered Maddox.



Remedios Varo, *Creation of the Birds*, c. 1957

Often overlooked and side-lined by art history's narratives, these Surrealists of the 'second city' not only separated themselves from the London-based members but were determined to make art that was more revolutionary, more scandalous and ultimately more surreal, than that of their southern rivals. Driven by this desire, the Birmingham Surrealists instead built strong and direct links with the Surrealists in Paris, including the movement's founder; in return, they were welcomed and applauded, and none more than Bridgwater.

In his founding 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Breton had defined Surrealism as: "Pure psychic automatism ... the dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all moral or aesthetic concerns". Among those who adopted automatic drawing, which allowed them to suppress all conscious control in favour of chance, was Bridgwater. During the war years, which were a particularly productive time for her, she experimented with automatic ink drawing as a means of accessing and expressing her subconscious, without bounds. Impressed, Breton wrote in the 1940s: "Bridgwater brought a new purity of outlook to British Surrealism, returning to the early days of the movement, to its 'automatic' beginnings in France".

Bridgwater's art proves that for her Surrealism was, above all, a state of mind. Alongside her fluid pictorial experiments, she also wrote much poetry, populated by the same symbols from her drawings and the recesses of her mind: birds, plants, spirals and "twisted forms". She successfully published her poems in significant surrealist and modernist publications, including Arson, *Free Unions—Unions Libres* and *Le Savoir Vivre*. But, like the work of many women writers, her poetry is yet to be published in its entirety, despite deserving this recognition.

During her lifetime, Bridgwater's poetry also inspired a leading member of the British Surrealists, who published her work, and with whom she had a brief affair, Toni del Renzio. In 1942 he wrote her a love poem, 'These Pennies were Well Spent', steeped with the very same symbols from her writings: shadows and eyes and "darkest caves".

That same year, Bridgwater held her first solo show at Jack Bilbo's Modern Gallery in London. By 1947, Breton selected her and Maddox as two of just four British Surrealists, to be exhibited at the International Surrealist show at Galerie Maeght in Paris. On this occasion, she was also chosen to sign the 1947 declaration of the Surrealist Group in England, proving that she had become one of the most important artists of not only the Birmingham surrealists, but the British Surrealist group, while operating on an international stage.

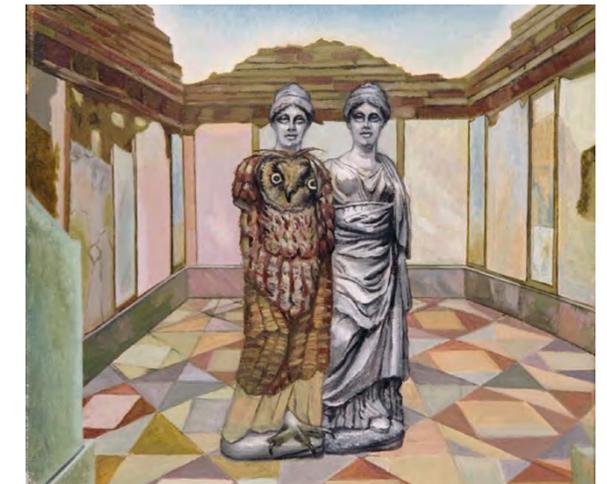
Although Birmingham's male Surrealists' shunned London's artists, Bridgwater played a critical role in bridging the gap between the two competing cities. In part, this was because she made a close and significant friendship with fellow female Surrealist, Edith Rimmington. Here was yet another ally for Bridgwater, who found herself operating not only a regional surrealist, but as a minority female member of a movement, which primarily relied on women as sexualised muses, inspiring male desire, rather than operating as artists in their own right.

Like numerous other female members, from Leonora Carrington to Remedios Varo and Rimmington, Bridgwater appropriated the

language of surrealism to express her own desires and fears. She subverted domestic spaces, reimagining them in claustrophobic terms, and played with imagery of life's origins, focused on the symbolism of fertility. This search for freedom in the feminine also demanded the respect and praise of her male counterparts, as Morris writes in *The British Surrealists*:

Her paintings had a powerful impact on those who encountered them. Toni del Renzio said of them: "We do not see these pictures. We hear their cries and are moved by them. Our own entrails are drawn painfully from us and twisted into the pictures whose significance we did not want to realize." Robert Melville commented: "...although they are dreamlike in their ambiguity they are realistic documents from a region of phantasmal hopes and murky desires..." Michel Remy described her as an "explorer of the sulfurous lavas and springtime of the unconscious."

But, and as has been the case for so many women artists throughout history, caring duties took precedence over Bridgwater's career – she had to look after both her elderly mother and disabled



Edith Rimmington, *Sisters of Anarchy*, 1941



Leonora Carrington, *The Giantess*, c.1947

Nevertheless, as both a regional and female surrealist, Bridgwater has been overlooked, especially during recent decades, and to many, she is yet an unknown member of this pioneering movement, in which she played such a leading role. Bridgwater acknowledged that the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition inspired a “transformation” on her. But, following that first introduction to the movement, she too played a hugely transformational role, with her experimental works returning British surrealism back to its most radical, revolutionary origins.

In 2022, and on the occasion of her first solo show in 32 years, it’s time that Bridgwater’s story was retold for today’s audiences. It comes amongst increased interest in the once-side-lined women surrealists, emerging from the shadow of their male counterparts. In 2019, Tate held a major Dora Maar retrospective, Frida Kahlo recently claimed the highest price paid at auction for a Latin American artwork, \$34.9m, beating the record previously set by her husband, and Alice Rahon is being reassessed by San Francisco dealer, Wendi Norris, with an exhibition this year.

Deservedly joining the ranks of these ‘rediscovered’ surrealists, who should never have been forgotten, is Bridgwater. Highly regarded during her lifetime, by both critics and the founders of surrealism, she was a visionary force who changed the face of art history. Including never-before exhibited paintings, collages and drawings, this exhibition presents her as an imaginative surrealist, whose complex narratives of the subconscious speak for themselves. A heroine of female, Birmingham and British surrealism, her surrealist state of mind still lives on, as it should.

sister throughout the 1950s and 60s. Bridgwater did then return to the scene in the 1970s, when she primarily produced collages, and exhibited in numerous group Surrealist shows. Then, throughout the 1980s and 90s, the art world’s interest in her work continued: she was included in retrospective Surrealist exhibitions in both public and private galleries in Birmingham, London, Milan and Paris.

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## About the author:

Ruth Millington is an art historian and author of *Muse* (Penguin, 2022).



## *Emmy Bridgwater and “The Spaces Where Swallows Try Their Turns”*

By Tor Scott

During a career that spanned over half a century, the artist and poet Emmy Bridgwater (1906-1999) created the surreal dreamscapes and wrote the esoterically charged prose that would characterise her oeuvre. Exploring the complex relationships between the human body, the natural environment and the violence of war, these sinister, ecologically rich compositions give the viewer a rare insight into the artist's quixotic inner world. However, across lunar terrains, amongst pansies, rushing waterfalls and serpents, it is Bridgwater's repeated use of bird motifs that best defines her ideological and artistic engagement with nature.

Although birds have been incorporated thematically and visually within paintings and poems for centuries, Bridgwater's use of avian imagery occupies a culturally unique space in British art and literature. In the wake of the First and Second World Wars, English artists and writers began to make comparisons between the untamed - and often destructive - power of nature as a metaphor for the carnage left by bombs and tanks. Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds* (published in 1952, and the best-known example of this genre) has been interpreted as an allegory for the horror of aerial attacks during the Blitz. In a similar fashion, swallows, swans, and kingfishers (all of which take centre stage in Bridgwater's work, and in her poems) become allegories not only for the collective anxiety that gripped Britain during the war years, but also the devastation that followed. These metaphors appear too in the work of other artists associated with British Surrealism, such as Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988) and Edith Rimmington (1902-1986). Rimmington's poems not only mirror Bridgwater's own references to what might be described as a form of secular panpsychism, but also create discomfort by juxtaposing the unnatural horrors of war with avian intervention. This can be best seen in *The Sea-Gull* (published in 1946), where Rimmington describes “a lazy crowd of gulls” which are unceremoniously fed “human flesh by tanks and guns”.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1940s, as the Second World War raged, Bridgwater's work began to flourish. Much like Rimmington, her poems and paintings critique not only the human cost of combat, but also the destruction or mutation of nature as a silent casualty of war. She frequently explored themes of death and the afterlife, using dark, morbid subject matter, set within fragmented landscapes and haunted by strange, feathery beings. For example, in Bridgwater's automatic drawings we encounter half-bird, half-woman hybrids, formed with strokes of flowing ink, and occupying liminal, empty spaces. Encumbered with large beaks, beady eyes and stringy hair that sprouts forth from their bird-like skulls, these creatures are part animal, yet retain human-shaped shadows. They are amongst a variety of anthropomorphic forms depicted by Bridgwater that are fractured or distorted by some unseen violence and plagued by unnatural growths.

In addition to these disturbing visions, ornithological symbols materialise in Bridgwater's work in more subtle or intangible ways. The scholar Michel Remy has referred to the "circularity characteristic"<sup>2</sup> of Bridgwater's poetry, alluding to the swooping, swirling, and undulating pace of her writing. He argues that her looping repetition of certain words or lines mirrors the movement of birds in the sky, as can be seen in the poem *Closing Time*, in which she describes the "spaces where swallows try their turns".<sup>3</sup> The soothing nature of such imagery, in tandem with the threat of violence, makes for compelling reading and can also be seen in *Declaration* (1939). Here, Bridgwater harnesses bird imagery to comment on the quiet, uncanny calm before the outbreak of World War II. It is chant-like in its repetitive lull, its apathetic tone reminding the reader that one war had not long ended; its brutality would still have been fresh in the artist's mind:

"Hostilities have started."

Ten little bluetits are pecking at crumbs

Pecking at crumbs in the bird box.

Hostilities have started

Hitler has bombed

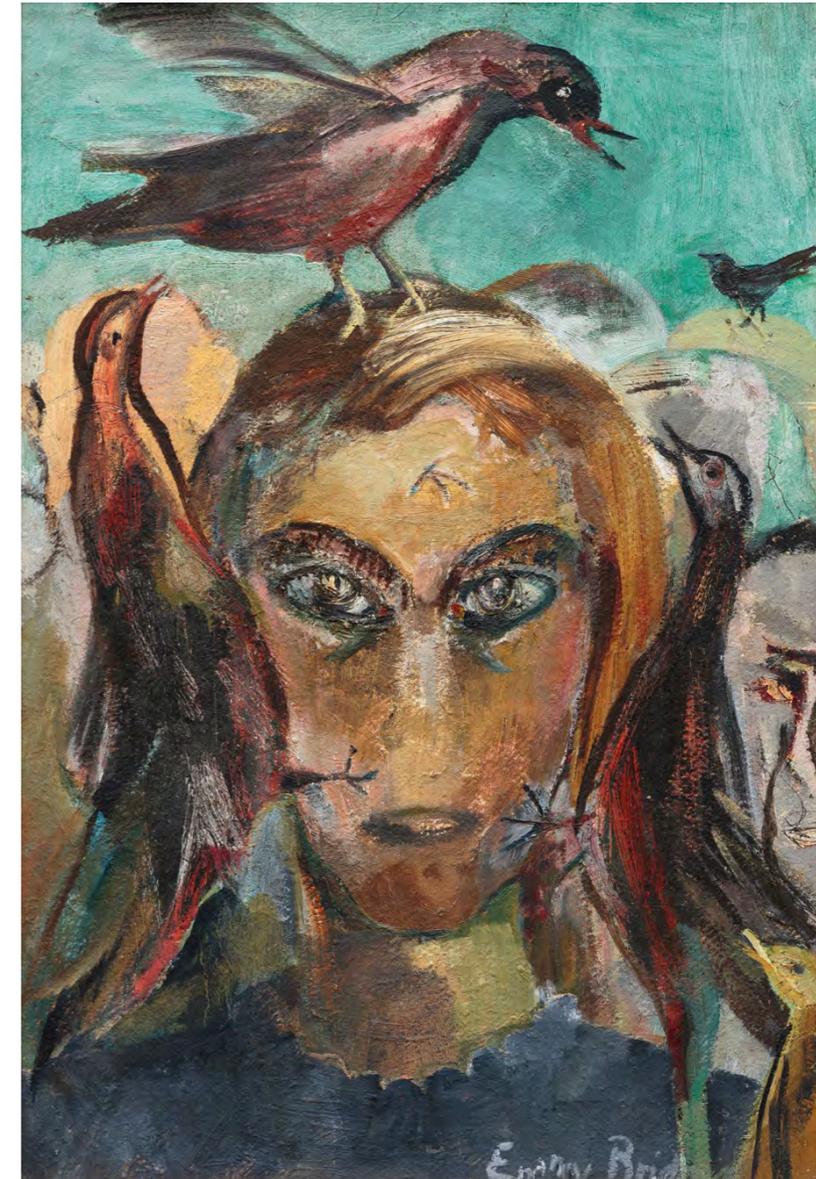
Danzig at Five this morning...<sup>4</sup>



*The Unpredictable*  
c. 1942  
Oil on board  
35.5 x 45.7 cm  
14 x 18 inches

In this poem, the juxtaposition of the quiet calm of animals searching for food, and the catastrophic German invasion of Poland is deliberately disjointed. We find the artist contrasting the fragility of the birds with the calculated, indiscriminate violence of an air-battle that would signal the beginnings of World War II.

Yet, in Bridgwater's surreal worlds, these birds are not always as delicate and placid as they might at first seem, and - as we have seen in Rimmington's poetry - often play the part of antagonist. Included in the Surrealist publication *Free unions - Unions libres* (1946), Bridgwater's three-part prose poem *The Birds* is a cautionary tale filled with nursery rhyme and folkloric dialogue. In part two, rapacious blackbirds discuss the constitution and behaviour of animated corpses, before engaging in a carnivorous fixation with the red lips of an unnamed protagonist. The bird-as-human-predator theme is explored once again in Bridgwater's *Footprints*, an oil on board composition which was painted around 1945. Here, with an apocalyptic atmosphere reminiscent of Max Ernst's *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* (1924), a flock of birds plague a young woman, landing in her hair and scratching at her cheeks.



*Footprints*  
c. 1945  
Oil on board  
53.3 x 35.6 cm  
21 x 14 inches

Amidst the sometimes gruesome, and often ominous subject matter, there is a tentative optimism in Bridgwater's work, akin to the thinly veiled moral cynicism one might find in old, dark fairy tales. Sometimes this is quite literal: we find witches accompanied by black cats, or animals that seem to take on human characteristics, and at other times this takes on a more metaphorical slant. For example, executed in the muted colour palette and dry brush strokes typical of Bridgwater's painting during the mid-1940s, *Night Time Phoenix* presents the viewer with a scene as tragic as it is triumphant. Despite depicting a bird that is traditionally associated with rebirth, here the artist gives a cautionary re-interpretation of the phoenix myth. Perhaps alluding to the futility of the war (and the perceived transformation that comes with emotional and physical sacrifice of battle) the anguished face at the centre of *Night Time Phoenix* appears to be in the process of being torn apart by the elements, or some unseen nuclear agent. Instead of reflecting the joy of new beginnings, in this image rebirth and transformation come at great cost. The light of the moon cuts through the head, whilst fragmented pieces of earth seem to merge into it. The hair and flesh seem to take on the same colour and texture as the natural environment that surrounds it, blending and dissolving into the rock or soil.

Ultimately channelling the artist's own anxieties with regards to the war, temporality and bodily transformation, birds occupy much of Bridgwater's artistic language. Ever a pacifist, her work has been described as alluding to "...the choice that the world has to make between destruction or peace through the use of opposites."<sup>5</sup> She uses carefully crafted metaphors to question man's tendency towards inhumanity, not only to fellow man, but also to nature: to the earth and to the animals that inhabit it. These environmental and political concerns are enduring, and cross generational, allowing Bridgwater's work to remain socially and spiritually pertinent to this day.



*Night Time Phoenix*  
c. 1945  
Oil on board  
39 x 56.5 cm  
15 3/8 x 22 1/4 inches

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Rimmington, E. (1946). The Sea-Gull. In S.W. Taylor (Ed.), *Free unions - Unions libres*. Watson Taylor & Express Printers, London.

<sup>2</sup> Remy, M. (2013). On the Thirteenth Stroke of Midnight: Surrealist Poetry in Britain. (2013). United Kingdom: Carcanet. p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Remy, M. (2013). On the Thirteenth Stroke of Midnight: Surrealist Poetry in Britain. (2013). United Kingdom: Carcanet. p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Levy, S. (2000). *Surrealism in Birmingham, 1935-1954*. United Kingdom: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> Deepwell, K., & Sugg, D. (1990). EMMY BRIDGWATER. *Women's Art Magazine* (Archive: 1990-1996), (37), 14-16. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/emmy-bridgwater/docview/2341301631/se-2>

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Tor Scott is a Collection & Research Assistant at the National Galleries of Scotland, and an AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) funded PhD candidate at the University of Edinburgh.

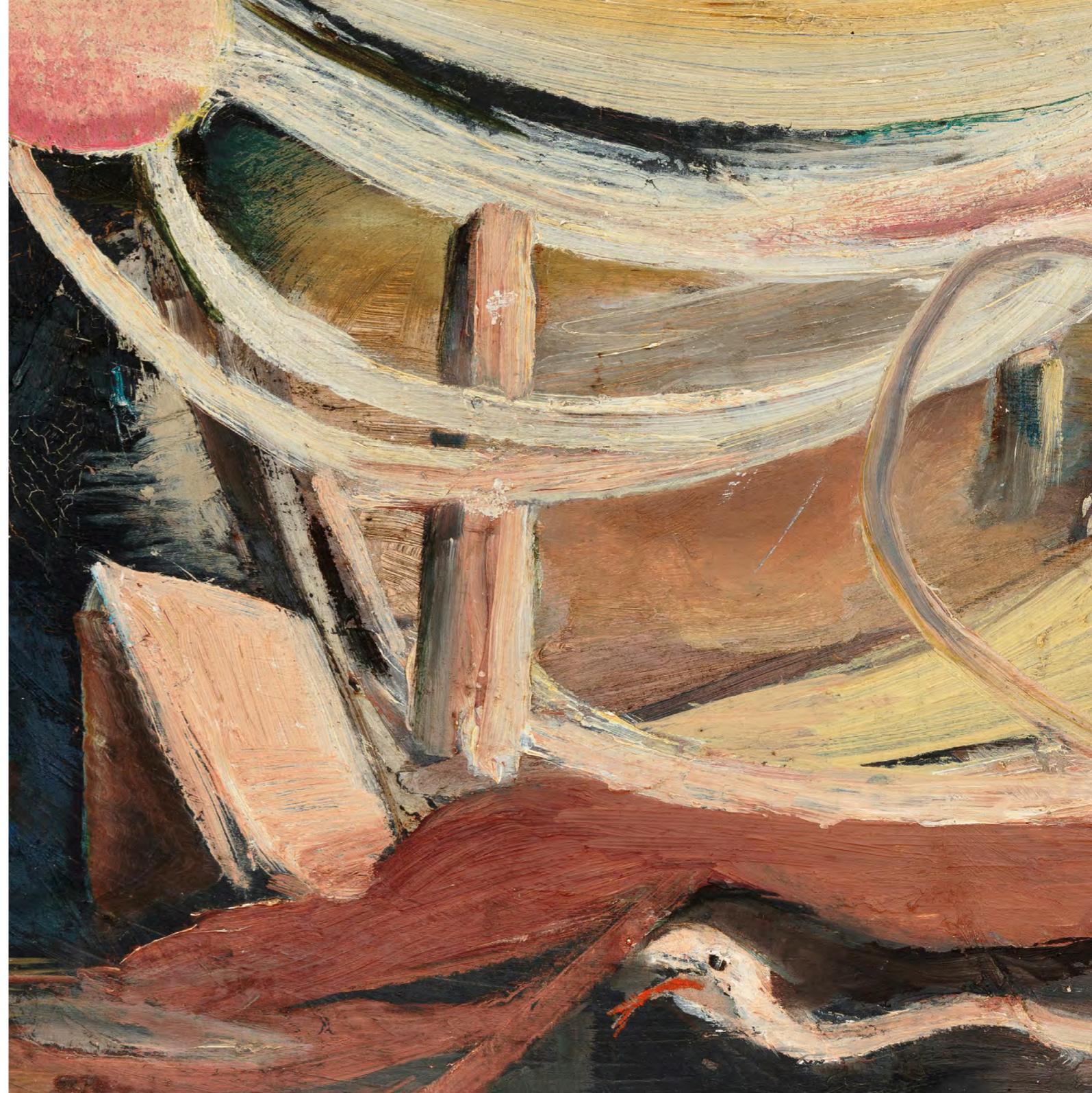
# *Lost and Found*

## *Family, Mythology and Emmy Bridgwater*

By Lisa Rüll

Emmy Bridgwater's relationship with the Midlands — its culture, its social attitudes, and her family — played a key role in her experiences and her artistic career. Her paintings, drawings, poetry and prose offer a reading of the relationship between surrealism and England, and specifically Birmingham, that is fundamentally different to that provided by mainstream books on the European movement. By unpicking the apparent contradiction between Bridgwater's 'uneventful' life and her 'radical' contribution to 'the fundamentally revolutionary enterprise of surrealism'<sup>1</sup>, this essay explores how Bridgwater and the subsequent histories negotiated the impact of personal experience and circumstances on her work.

The geographic puzzle of Bridgwater's career frequently placed her on the (provincial) fringes of artistic activity. Sometimes this was achieved by falsely connecting her periods of greatest artistic activity with her residing in London and no place for Birmingham. Alternatively, wholesale dismissal of British surrealism removed her from any focus of attention: maintaining the domination of mainland Europe in the story of surrealism. Such simplistic readings disguise more complex truths. An intensely private person, her Edwardian upbringing taught her the importance of family duty: indeed, for around twenty years from 1950, she effectively abandoned her artistic career in order to care for her disabled eldest sister and elderly mother. But her wholehearted adoption of surrealism encompassed a variety of socially challenging ideas: rejection of religion; psychoanalysis and the importance of dream; and freedom of sexual expression. She combined automatism's unconscious creativity with an instinctively personal iconography. By reading Bridgwater back into her Midlands history, whilst simultaneously acknowledging her wider importance, some of the mythologies surrounding her life and career may be stripped away.



## Family myths: Origins, Class and Femininity

When Katy Deepwell and Deborah Sugg wrote their 1990 article on Bridgwater, they specifically identified her 'class' as a 'difference', an issue in her exclusion from the history of surrealism.<sup>2</sup> This implied that by virtue of living in Birmingham and having limited financial backing from her father, supplemented by 'secretarial work', she was a working-class heroine ignored by modernist art history. The point about modernism was true enough, with its restrictive linear history and canon of great (male) innovators progressing towards abstract expressionism. But by the 1990s, social and feminist art historians had revealed modernism as a selective, self-fulfilling ideology. The problem with Deepwell and Sugg's tone rather lay in their subtle equation of province with poverty. Bridgwater's difference from her peers, her marginal position within British surrealism, seemed far more complex than 'class' could account for.

Bridgwater's paternal grandfather, Charles, was a carpenter. Her maternal grandfather worked as a 'commercial traveller' and, following his early death, his widow was a 'ladies outfitter'. Although her maternal grandparents were previously identified as local artists, evidence suggests this was a personal rather than a professional interest.<sup>3</sup> Such information implies working-class ancestors. But as early as September 1875, on writing his will, Charles Bridgwater left property in Heeley Road, Selly Oak to his wife Emma. By his death in 1906, the family had been living at 41 Lee Crescent, Edgbaston for some years and the Selly Oak dwelling houses were a surplus income generator. From the late 1890s, many of the Bridgwater family were living in the leafy, city suburb of Edgbaston.

Known as the Birmingham Belgravia, Edgbaston saw its population rise from 2,699 in 1881 to 16,368 in 1911.<sup>4</sup> Its large detached and semi-detached houses, and white Georgian-style terraces, were extremely popular with the new professional classes. The first substantial Birmingham telephone directories indicate enthusiastic take-up by Edgbaston residents for a home-telephone system. It was certainly a place for the Bridgwater family to live out their aspirations.

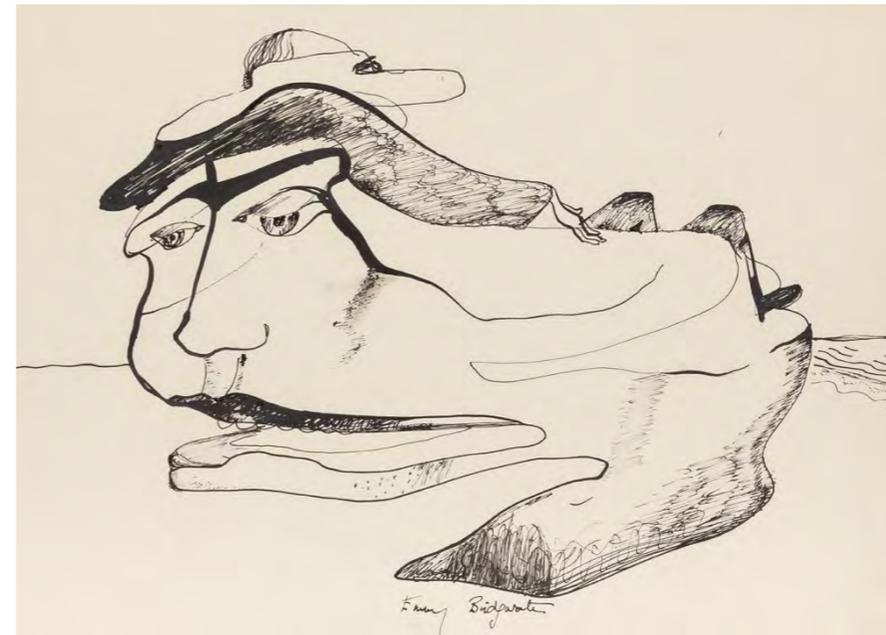
William Frith Bridgwater, Emmy Bridgwater's father, was a chartered accountant in central Birmingham: a 'good' career requiring professional training that appears absolutely middle-class. However, class position was based on a complex combination of attributes and an appropriate public face. Middle-class status required not just the right sort of income - salaried - from a stable, pensioned career, but also the 'right' sort of address; status through voting rights; and correct attitudes on matters of gender and the social hierarchy. Some professions, such as solicitors, were considered at the lower-end of the middle-class.<sup>5</sup> Given such ambiguities, the physical and attitudinal attributes of property, servants, education, and female behaviour, would prove equally important as any profession to the Bridgwater pursuit of middle-class status.



Portrait of Emmy Bridgwater outside her family home in Edgbaston, early 1930s

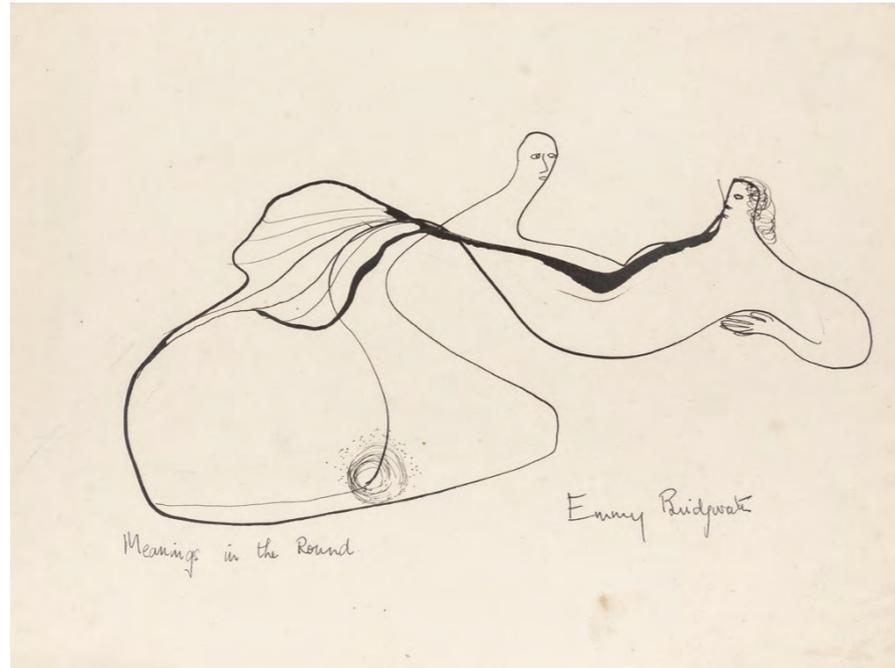


*Juxtaposition*  
c. 1939  
Pen and ink on paper  
17.8 x 24.4 cm  
7 x 9 5/8 inches

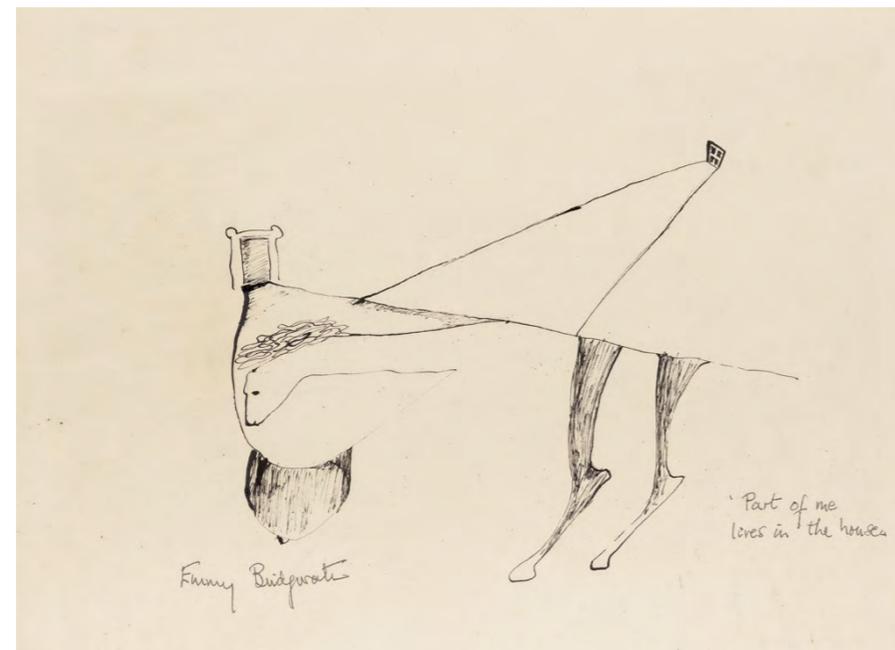


*Untitled (Indifference Tide)*  
c. 1939  
Pen and ink on paper  
17.8 x 22.8 cm  
7 x 9 inches

*Meanings in the Round*  
c. 1939  
Pen and ink on paper  
17.8 x 22.8 cm  
7 x 9 inches



*Part of me lives in the house*  
c. 1939  
Pen and ink on paper  
17.8 x 24 cm  
7 x 9 1/2 inches



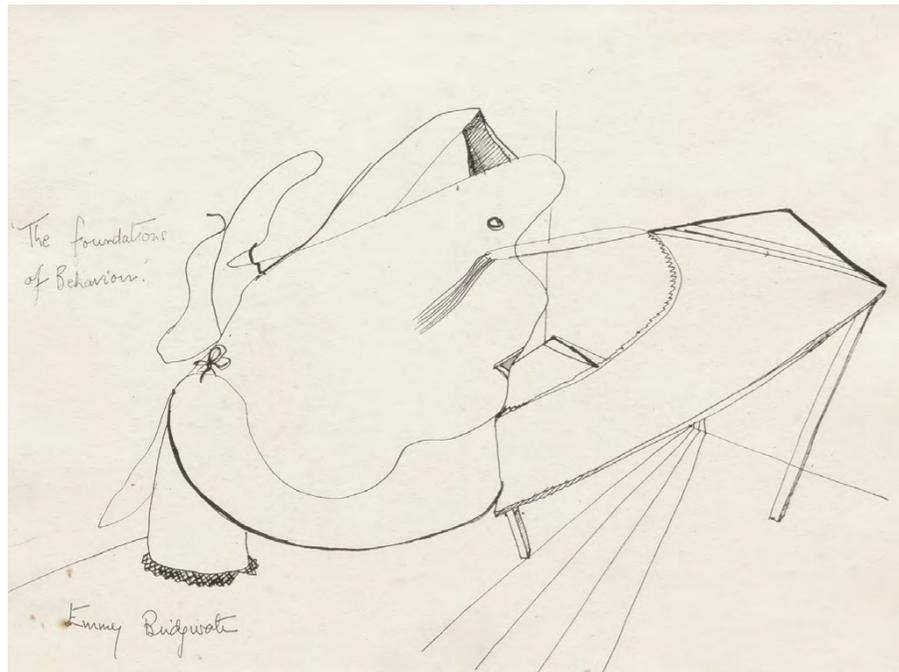
When they married in 1896, William Frith Bridgwater and Kate Piercy Sanderson were slightly older than most couples (they were 31 and 28 respectively). The Bridgwaters were a close-knit Methodist family, regular attendees at the local Wesleyan Chapel on Bristol Road in Edgbaston. They respected the prudence of postponing marriage until financial security was assured. After a short time at 29 Varna Road (later renamed), the couple moved with their first daughter Bessie into 42 Lee Crescent next door to William's parents. Although 43-45 Lee Crescent housed the Crowley Orphanage for Girls, these Georgian-style properties were highly sought-after residences. With a young disabled daughter to care for, the Victorian values and beliefs in 'family' held by the Bridgwaters no doubt reinforced the status-enhancing move back to Lee Crescent. (When Lee Bank Middleway dual carriageway cut through the Edgbaston skyline in the later twentieth-century, the Bridgwater residences were two of just a handful still left standing).

Katherine was born in 1905. Emma Frith, known as Emmy, was born 10 November 1906 - just under seven months after her grandfather Charles' death - and was named after his widow. When Bridgwater was three years old the family moved to spacious 1 Pakenham Road, a three-storey Victorian house with a large driveway and gardens. Bridgwater's uncle Joseph and new wife Lilian Sara took over 42 Lee Crescent.

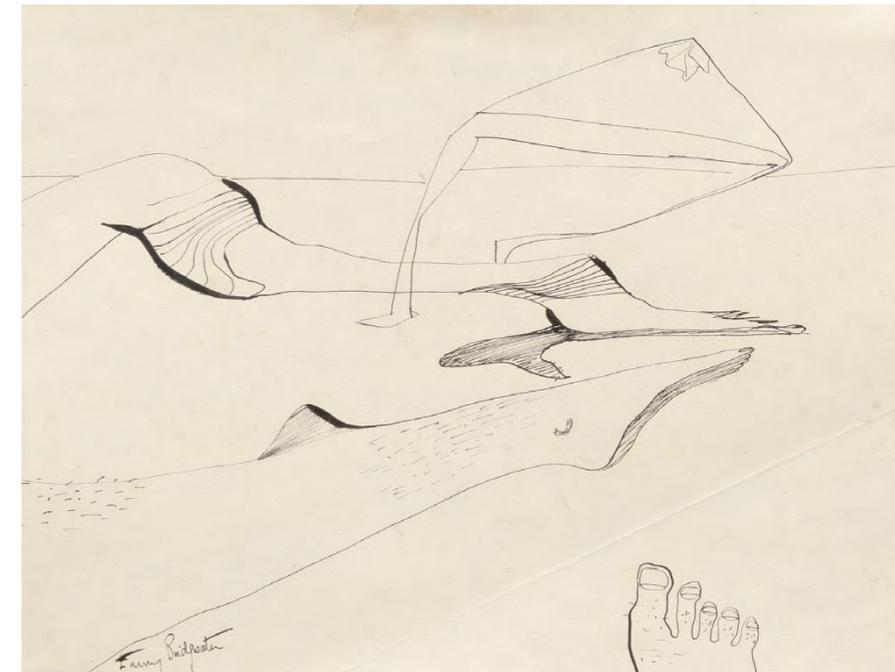
At the Bridgwater's new home servants were employed to help with the house and garden and, possibly, with care for the children. A phone line was installed; supplementary to the work number William had at his Birmingham office. Bridgwater grew up playing the family's grand piano, becoming interested in painting and drawing.<sup>6</sup> Such accomplishments were still deemed an appropriate training for femininity, alongside an increased emphasis on domestic subjects - home craft, cookery, and needlework. None of these warranted inclusion in the main bands of subjects for matriculation and grading for the School Certificate Examination.<sup>7</sup> For girls, academic success was of limited value when compared to the inculcation of social deference to (male) authority and the supreme importance of family duty. 'Petit bourgeois' notions of respectability and femininity were mostly drawn from more affluent upper-class role models. The extent to which the Bridgwater girls were expected to conform to these ideas is a matter for reasoned conjecture.

### *Recollecting Edgbaston: Brave Morning*

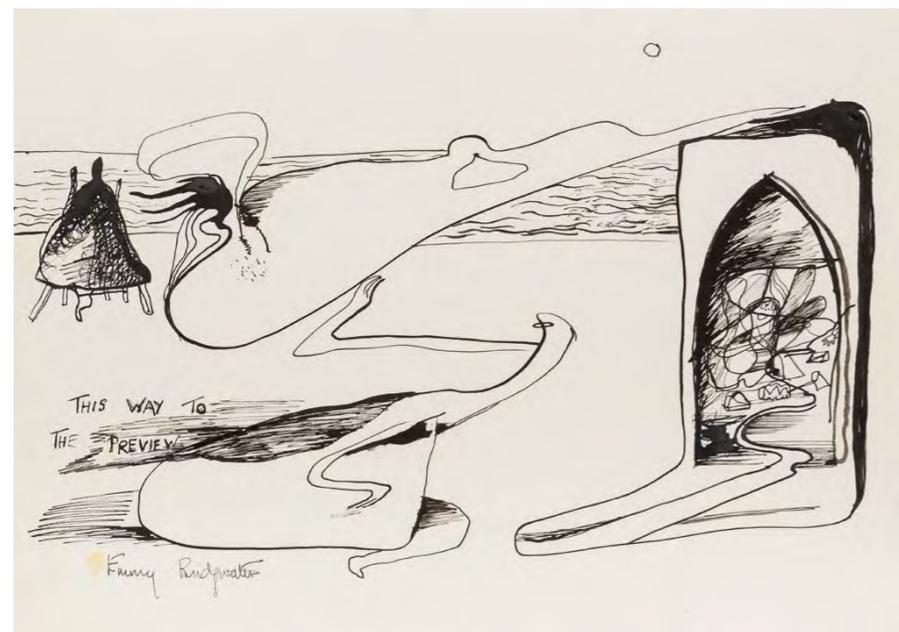
Bridgwater's dream-like memories of her family home are encapsulated in *Brave Morning*, an image she described as 'my lifetime viewed in little squares'.<sup>8</sup> Like many of her canvases, its style is 'painterly', with thick brushstrokes of colour and expressionistic gestural lines. A central figure, perhaps herself, throws open the curtains and window to the new day. Birds regularly appear in her imagery, and here a red phoenix-type bird, symbol of a freed soul and a harbinger of change, flaps its glorious wings over the head of a man wearing a smart top hat (Bridgwater's father). Undermining his Victorian authority, a pear grows at right angles from the side of his hat. From the shadowed darkness, under the bird's wing, a single eye watches through an egg-shaped peephole. The grand gardens of Edgbaston are echoed in a row of poplars. A lacy white curtain, tinged with red - light or blood - colour flaps curvaceously against the pale blue sky and the black darkness from which the central figure emerges. A pink flower droops onto the head of a comically drawn dog. Yet despite all this black humoured symbolism recalling her stifled Methodist upbringing, Bridgwater still finds room for one more grotesque episode articulating the ambiguities of her self-image. A violently decapitated figure sits at the table in a crisp white blouse and brown school pinafore. Her hands reach out to the large dish before her: it is, in Bridgwater's own words, 'me... about to eat my own head for breakfast'.<sup>9</sup>



*The Foundations of Behaviour*  
c. 1940  
Pen and ink on paper  
15.2 x 23 cm  
6 x 9 inches



*The End of the Marathon*  
c. 1942  
Pen and ink on paper  
17.8 x 22.9 cm  
7 x 9 inches



*This Way to the Preview*  
c. 1945  
Pen and ink on paper  
15.2 x 22.8 cm  
6 x 9 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1945  
Ink on paper  
18.5 x 24.6 cm  
7 1/4 x 9 3/4 inches



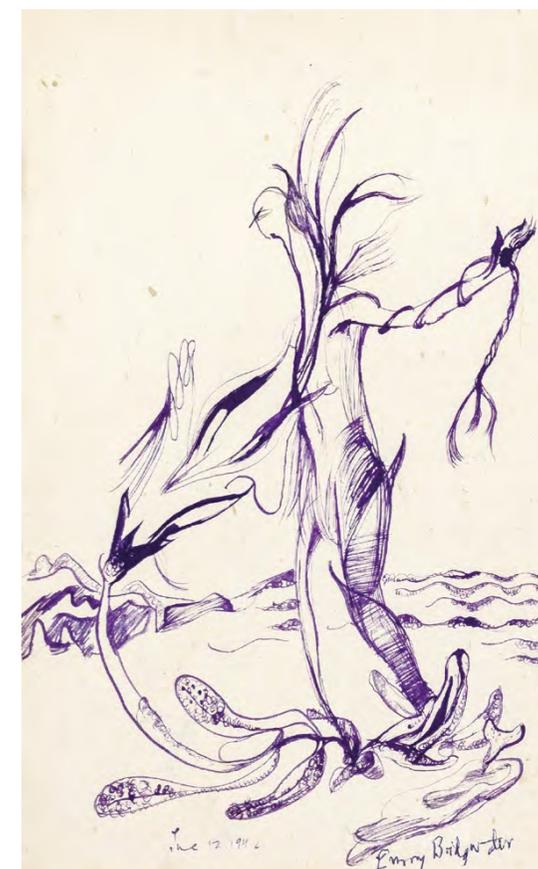
*Theory of Beauty*  
12 June 1942  
Ink on paper  
20.2 x 12.8 cm  
8 x 5 inches



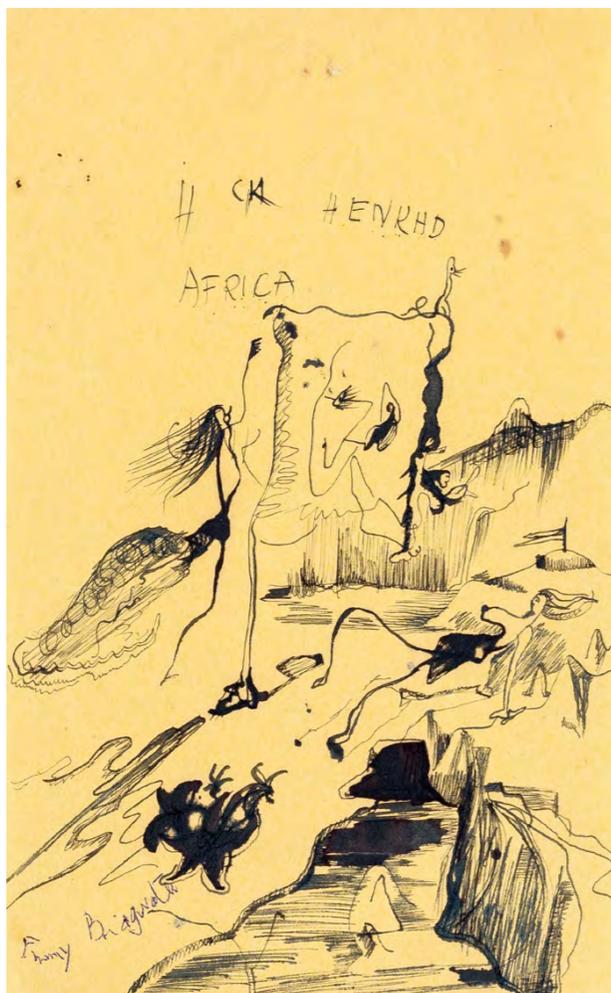
*Untitled*  
1942  
Ink on paper  
20.6 x 13 cm  
8 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1942  
Ink on paper  
20.5 x 12.8 cm  
8 1/8 x 5 inches



*Untitled*  
12 June 1942  
Ink on paper  
20.5 x 12.9 cm  
8 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches



Untitled  
c. 1942  
Ink on paper  
20.6 x 13 cm  
8 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches



Untitled  
6 May 1939  
Ink on paper  
20.5 x 25.6 cm  
8 1/8 x 10 1/8 inches

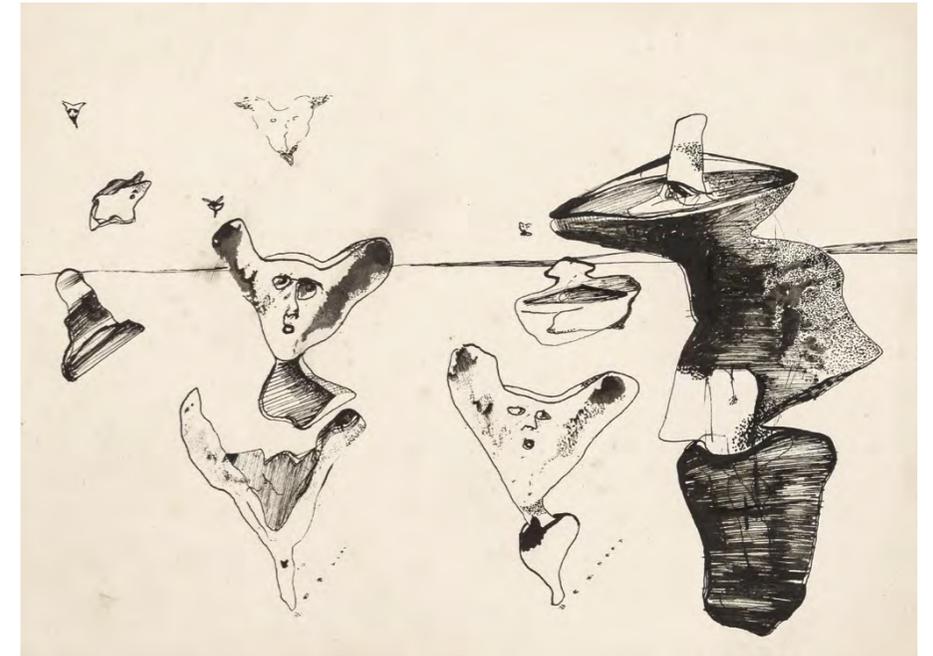
### *Movement towards / away from the centre: the Midlands and London*

During her early years in the Midlands, Bridgwater would have had limited access to modern art. Neither Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, nor the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, had much interest in promoting avant-garde ideas. She would also have had little access to contemporary arts magazines or debates; BBC broadcasts and publications such as *The Listener* provided rare sources of discussion about modern art.<sup>10</sup> Her attendance at the locally respected Birmingham Art School, under the tutelage of Bernard Fleetwood-Walker, provided a largely traditional, skills-based art education where most twentieth-century tendencies were still frowned upon. By contrast, fellow surrealist Eileen Agar enjoyed a chauffeured car lifestyle and education at the Slade in London,<sup>11</sup> in the midst of challenging contemporary exhibitions and occasional imported art journals.

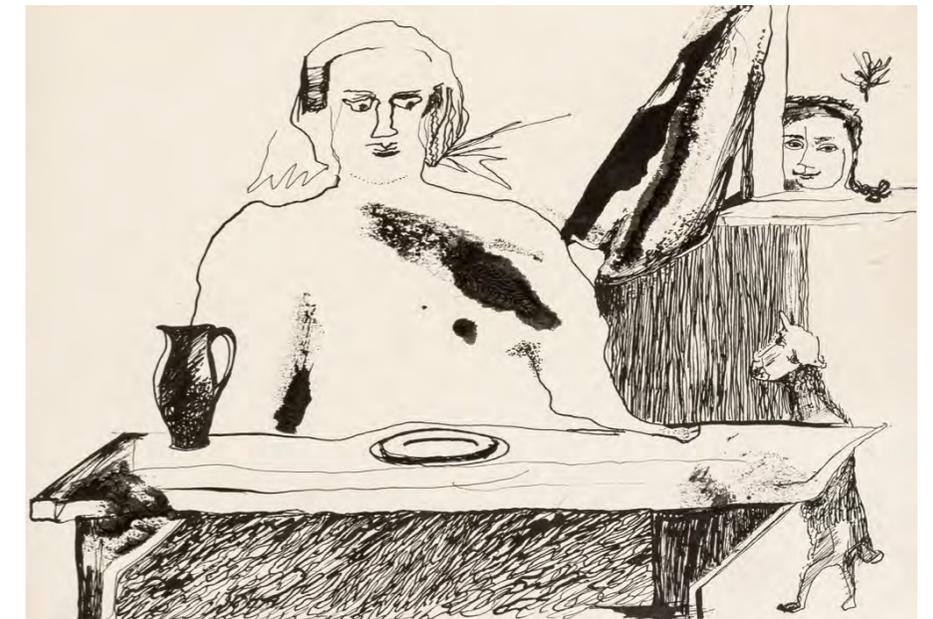
As is indicated by Bridgwater's frequent work as a secretary, she was doing her best to 'pay her way'. Assistance with tuition fees was the price for her relative freedom. Yet the records are hazy as to the exact nature of her work and skills. Working as a secretary to Hugh Chesterman in Oxford for a small magazine hardly fits an image of mundane office work. Her temporary move to Oxford to further her art education suggests a strong desire to develop her talent and assert some independence. It was an age where women increasingly sought an identity beyond that of wife and mother. However, it was several more years before Bridgwater felt strong enough to break her Edwardian family ties to Birmingham. Despite spending periods in London, using her secretarial skills to finance occasional courses at the Grosvenor School of Art and visiting the influential 1936 *International Surrealist Exhibition*, Bridgwater kept her recently acquired voting rights at her parental address.

From the late 1930s, Bridgwater began exhibiting with the Birmingham Group in both Birmingham and London. With like-minded friends, Conroy Maddox and brothers John and Robert Melville, she regularly spent time discussing surrealist ideas. She exhibited with them at the Lucy Wertheim Gallery in London in 1937, obtaining her first, ambiguous reviews. Her 'stylized landscapes' received some praise, but in signing her work as the non-gender specific 'E. Frith Bridgwater', one reviewer assumed her to be a man. By such innocuous errors are women artists' work lost in history.

In common with many surrealists, Bridgwater worked in both visual and literary forms. Writing was cheaper, requiring few expensive materials. Her writing echoes her visual iconography: metamorphosis of natural elements combined with dream or nightmare-like recollection of personal details. Many of her poems are dated to the early 1940s, when despite the dangers from bombing she was living almost fulltime in London. It was during these years that Bridgwater established herself within the Surrealist Group, having her first one-woman show at Jack Bilbo's Modern Gallery. However, one of the most important associations she made came when Conroy Maddox introduced her to Toni del Renzio.



*Untitled*  
c. 1945  
Ink on paper  
17.9 x 25.5 cm  
7 x 10 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1945  
Ink on paper  
17.8 x 25.8 cm  
7 x 10 1/8 inches



Untitled  
c. 1947  
Ink on paper  
23.3 x 29.3 cm  
9 1/8 x 11 1/2 inches



Untitled  
c. 1955  
Ink on paper  
21 x 29.8 cm  
8 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches

Del Renzio was a charismatic Russian-born artist and writer who had fought with the anti-fascists in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>12</sup> Although discord between him and E.L.T. Mesens later established a long-running split in the British surrealist ranks, at the time del Renzio was enthusiastically co-ordinating a new surrealist publication; finally published as the one-off journal *Arson: An Ardent Review* (1942). In this, Bridgwater was honoured by having two of her paintings illustrated - *Remote Cause of Infinite Strife* (1940) and *Moon tide* (1942) - and del Renzio himself wrote a short discussion of her work. The *Uncouth Invasion* poetically described the 'ecstatic writhings', the elemental twisting, that Bridgwater subjects her (visual) world to. Her coverage on two pages was an act that del Renzio described as 'solely my decision. I was very impressed by her and her work...'.<sup>13</sup> He later married Ithell Colquhoun, a surrealist whose interest in alchemical traditions caused some disquiet amongst her peers, but prior to this, it was Bridgwater with whom he shared an 'intimate' but brief relationship.<sup>14</sup> His poem *These Pennies Were Well Spent* (1942) was written for Bridgwater,<sup>15</sup> replete with sexual imagery ('flaming sword'), sensual music ('rhythms of jazz') and the love-struck blurring of eye-reflected identities:

My image is my own eye  
It is in your eyes and they are in mine.

By all accounts he was the only man she was ever serious about, and the relationship's intensity was still powerfully remembered by them both over 50 years later.<sup>16</sup>

From this, a simplistic biographical reading of Bridgwater's poems and art would identify all manner of associations with broken hearts and personal distress. Indeed, Bridgwater herself often dismissed attempts to analyse her work saying they were 'just personal'. However, surrealism was an idea that supported the exploration of personal fetishes, iconography, and excessive emotions. André Breton himself emphasised the significance of emotions which could not find suitable modes of expression in the conscious world.<sup>17</sup> Thus it is perfectly in keeping with surrealist concepts that Bridgwater should refer to her conscious/unconscious struggles with 'real life', whilst nevertheless producing extraordinary automatist-inspired work that should not be reduced to biographical explanation.

Bridgwater's sensuous evocation of the natural world - flowers, birds, eggs, and tendrils - may indicate memories of the leafy Edgbaston suburbs or may equally be a metaphorical representation of her frustrated sexual and maternal desires. Her organic metamorphoses are ambiguous, the centre is constantly displaced, and reality is endlessly destabilised.<sup>18</sup> The automatist inspirations expose an inner world, but external realities and pressures inevitably slip through. The budding blooms that dangle like earrings with watchful eyes in *Transplanted* send us confusing messages because surrealism always defied the explanations made in the conscious world. *Transplanted*, like many of Bridgwater's works, is undated: refusing associations with a particular life moment. She also rarely titled her works until long after their completion, wanting them to speak outside of any immediate personal context, resisting Freudian interpretations.

Yet there is something undeniably wistful in Bridgwater's poem *The Lost Ones* (1941) that emotionally- if not intellectually- I feel certain refers to the del Renzio relationship. In the midst of a passion, doesn't all contemplation seem to lead to the loved one?

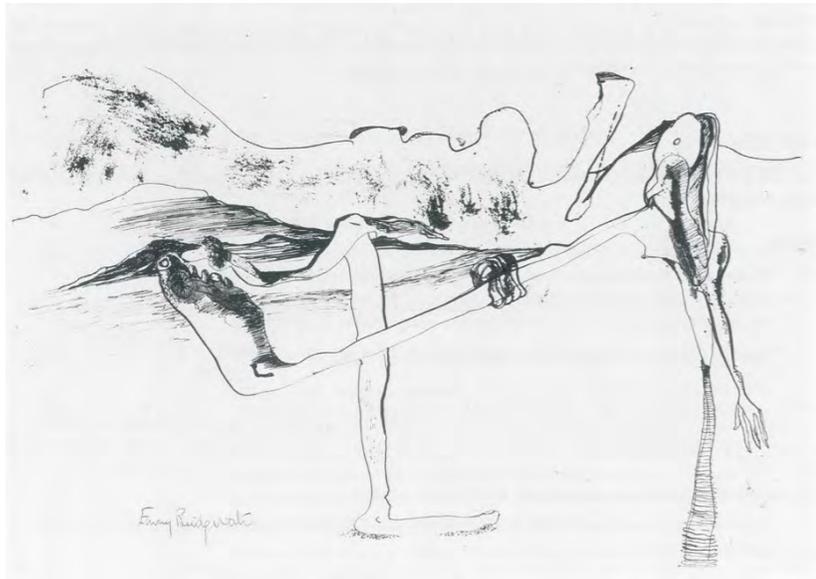
Of books and thoughts and singing,  
and fruit and flowers and you,  
'Yes, that's the worst', she said, the old hag,  
'Of picking out the handsome ones, '

## The presence of birds

Bridgwater's coverage in *Arson* was the first of several inclusions in surrealist journals. The contacts established through the Birmingham and London surrealist groups had brought her to the international stage, including participation in the 1947 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris. Yet such wider influences never compromised her vision. Her palette was softer, but a sense of surrealist black humour and violence remained. *Star Struck Venus* depicts a naked woman watched / attacked by three cats who stalk her body. Identities are blurred and the streaks of red across the woman's face could be red claws, wounds or even long fingernails. The image highlights the links with Bridgwater's writing, since one of the cats wears bright red lipstick. This curiously echoes scene two from *The Birds* — Bridgwater's illustrated prose for the journal *Free Unions Libres* (1946).<sup>19</sup> In this birds attack the heroine, usually interpreted as Bridgwater herself, by pecking at her lips.

When she persuades them to stop they stare at her: 'They were looking at her red lips'. She later attempts to perform a song before the King - Bridgwater's father - but the birds invade and retake the palace as their home. Thus when Bridgwater later commented that 'the lipstick-decorated cat was not out for any good purpose with those lips',<sup>20</sup> one may wonder if she was also critiquing her own 'grown-up' experience.

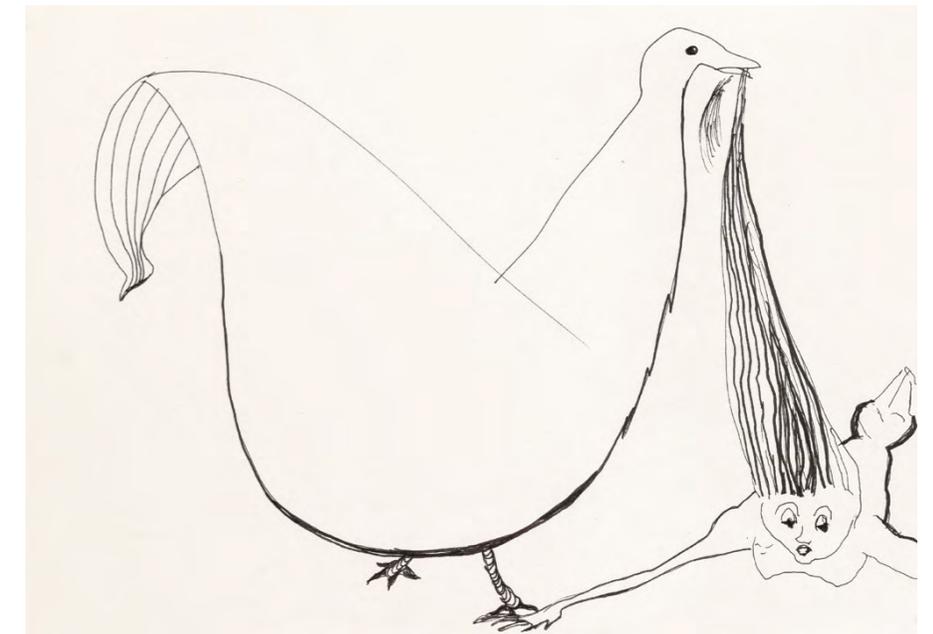
Bridgwater's personal iconography is also demonstrated in her drawings, where unconscious expression through automatist line is presented. The undulating landscapes sometimes threaten the unstable identities of their inhabitants- where figures adopt bird-like heads and beaks to accompany their useless withered hands. But often there are also unnerving comic effects in these drawings, as in the hilarious details of hairy legs and toes in *Untitled*, or the tent-shrouded cat in *Take Care The Referee Has Wings*. To echo Robert Melville's remarks, her work is 'more poetic, more disturbingly true to an abiding state of being' than at first it may appear. Her 'clear-sighted' visions come from that 'region of phantasmal hopes and murky desires' that few are able to perceive.<sup>21</sup>



Emmy Bridgwater, *Untitled*, 1941



*Tête à Tête*  
1947  
Ink on paper  
21 x 29.8 cm  
8 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1947  
Ink on paper  
17.6 x 25.3 cm  
6 7/8 x 10 inches

## *A different life*

When Bridgwater adopted the role of carer for her ageing mother and disabled sister from the 1950s, she was reflecting the upbringing of many daughters of her generation. The role of carer is often accepted through a combination of factors: socialisation, the ideal that concern for others above self is part of 'femininity'; an acceptance of the 'private sphere' as the proper place for female culture; and also- importantly- willingness.<sup>22</sup> One could argue that since by the 1950s surrealism's figurative experiments were falling from critical favour, Bridgwater deliberately chose to pull back from public attention. She had never sought to conform to expectations, not even to the glamour or outrageousness of her women surrealist colleagues. Whitney Chadwick's *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985) is dominated by such explosive personalities, but the quietly extraordinary world of Bridgwater's writing and images were given scant attention.<sup>23</sup> Although the 1980s and 1990s brought her once more to the international stage, this exhibition is special. It is a rare chance for the Midlands to recognise Bridgwater's contribution to surrealism.



*The Debutante*  
1955  
Ink on paper  
23.2 x 20.2 cm  
9 1/8 x 8 inches



*Untitled*  
c.1955  
Ink on paper  
21.3 x 29.8 cm  
8 3/8 x 11 3/4 inches



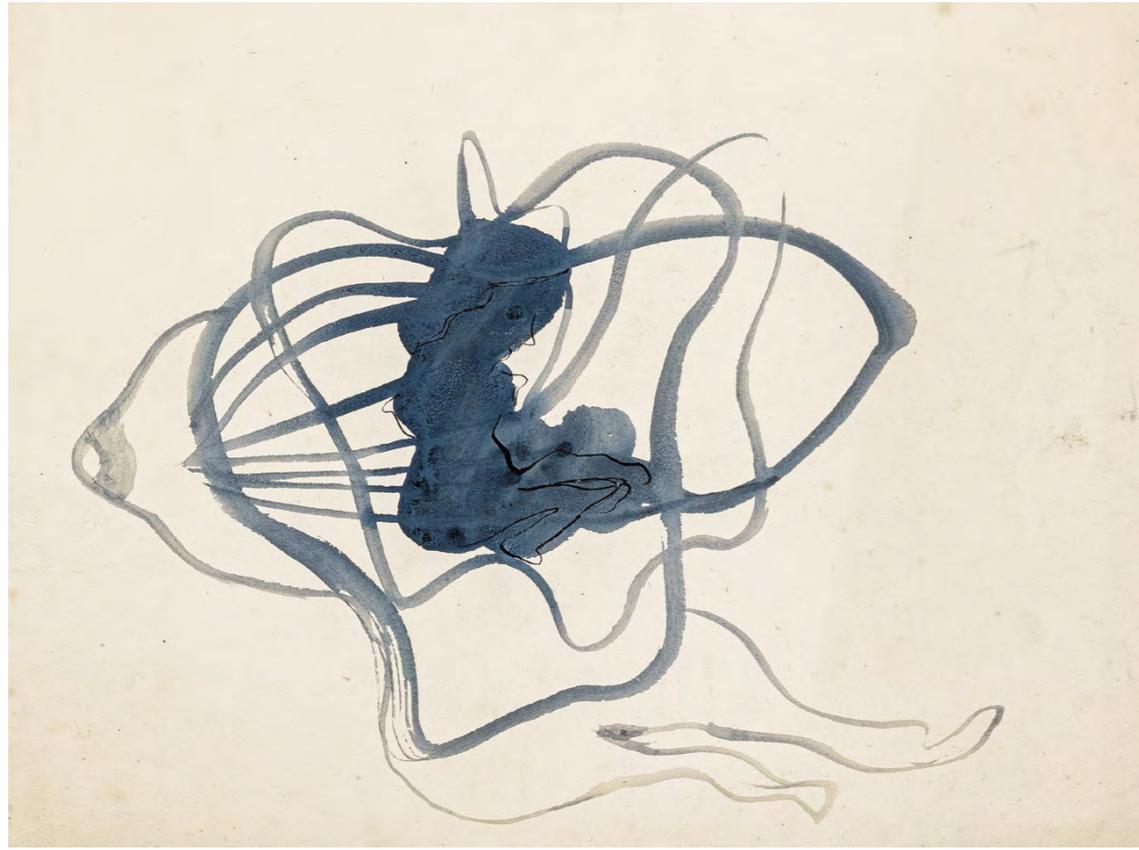
*Bewitched*  
c.1955  
Ink on paper  
20.2 x 25.1 cm  
8 x 9 7/8 inches

#### Endnotes

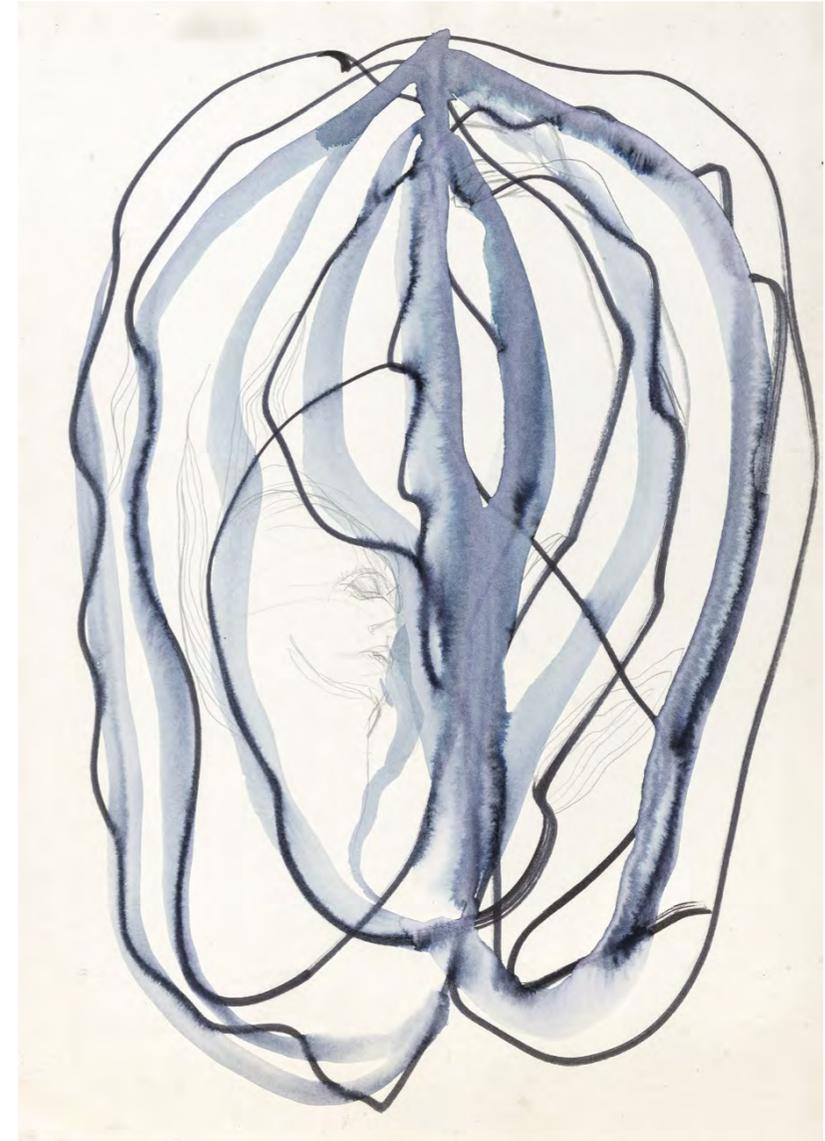
- <sup>1</sup> Michel Remy correspondence with the author, 1994
- <sup>2</sup> Kathy Deepwell and Deborah Sugg, 'Histories: Emmy Bridgwater' in *Women's Art Magazine*, No 37, 1990, pp.14-16, p.15
- <sup>3</sup> The pejorative term 'amateur' has deliberately been avoided
- <sup>4</sup> John Stevenson, *British Society 1914-45*, Penguin, London, 1984, pp.24-5
- <sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Crossick, 'The Emergence of the Lower Middle-Class in Britain: A Discussion' in Geoffrey Crossick (editor), *The Lower Middle-Class in Britain 1870-1914*, Croom Helm. London, 1977, pp. 11-60, p.12
- <sup>6</sup> Jeremy Jenkinson, correspondence with the author, 1994
- <sup>7</sup> Felicity Hunt, *Gender and Policy in English Education 1902-44*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, USA, 1991, pp. 82-83
- <sup>8</sup> Christine Sveinsson interviews with Emmy Bridgwater, 1993 and 1994
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 1994
- <sup>10</sup> Lisa Rüll, *Uncovering Difference: Emmy Bridgwater and British Surrealism*, University of Wolverhampton BA dissertation, 1994 (unpublished)
- <sup>11</sup> Oriana Badderley, 'Eileen Agar' in Theresa Grimes, Judith Collins, Oriana Badderley, *Five Women Painters*, Lennard Publishing, Herts, 1989, pp. 161-180., p.161
- <sup>12</sup> Michel Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 1999, p.224
- <sup>13</sup> Toni del Renzio correspondence with the author, 1994
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 1993
- <sup>15</sup> Remy, 1999, op.cit., p.242
- <sup>16</sup> Rüll, op.cit., 1994
- <sup>17</sup> André Breton, 'Limits Not Frontiers of Surrealism' in Herbert Read (editor) *Surrealism*, Faber & Faber, London, 1971 edition, pp.93-116
- <sup>18</sup> Michel Remy, 'Surrealism's Vertiginous Descent on Britain' in *Surrealism in Britain in the Thirties*, Leeds City Art Gallery, 1986 (exhibition catalogue), pp. 19-55, p.41
- <sup>19</sup> See *Anthology of Sources*
- <sup>20</sup> Christine Sveinsson, op.cit, 1994
- <sup>21</sup> Robert Melville, 'Challenging Pictures at Coventry Art Circle Exhibition,' *Coventry Standard*, 1947
- <sup>22</sup> Jane Lewis and Barbara Meredith, *Daughters Who Care- Daughters Caring for Mothers at Home*, Routledge, London, 1988, pp.5-6
- <sup>23</sup> Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991

#### About the author:

Dr. Lisa Rüll is a Specialist Support Tutor at the University of Nottingham having completed a PhD on the life and work of Peggy Guggenheim.



*Untitled*  
c. 1940s  
Gouache on paper  
18.5 x 24.3 cm  
7 1/4 x 9 5/8 inches



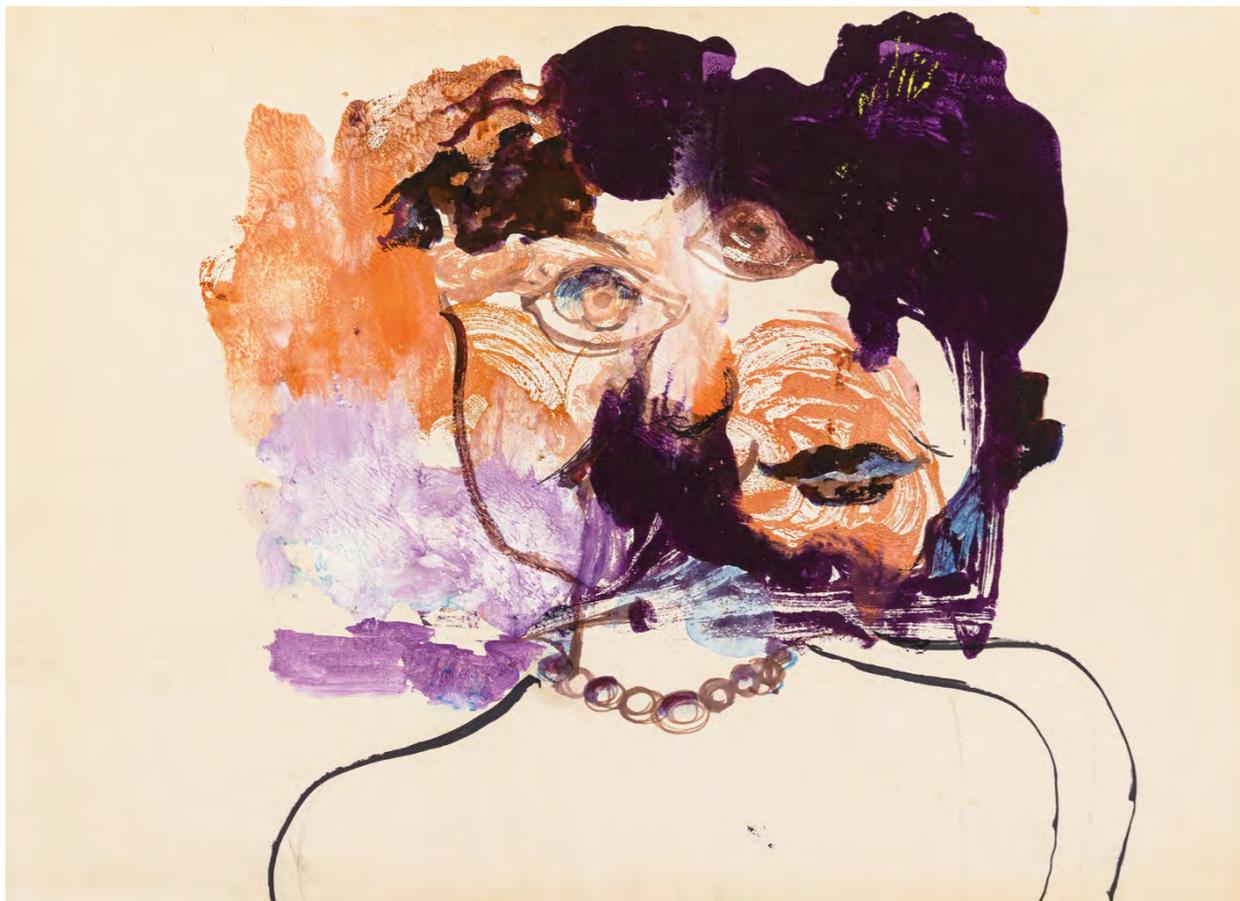
*Untitled*  
c. 1940s  
Gouache on paper  
29.8 x 21 cm  
11 3/4 x 8 1/4 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1940s  
Gouache on paper  
29.8 x 21 cm  
11 3/4 x 8 1/4 inches



*Revelation*  
c. 1940s  
Gouache on paper  
35.5 x 25 cm  
14 x 9 7/8 inches

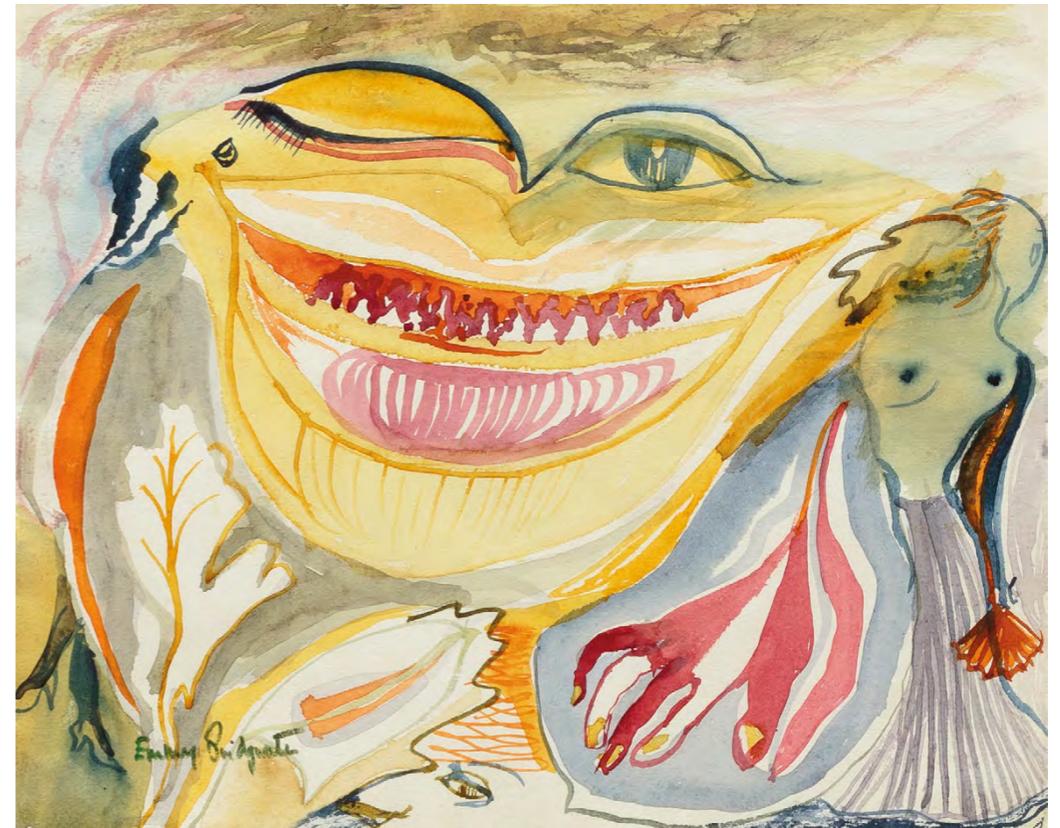


*Untitled*  
c. 1940s  
Gouache on paper  
42.5 x 59.2 cm  
16 3/4 x 23 1/4 inches



*Masked Mystery*  
1944  
Gouache on paper  
48 x 31 cm  
18 7/8 x 12 1/4 inches

Untitled  
c. 1942  
Watercolour  
24 x 30.8 cm  
9 1/2 x 12 1/8 inches





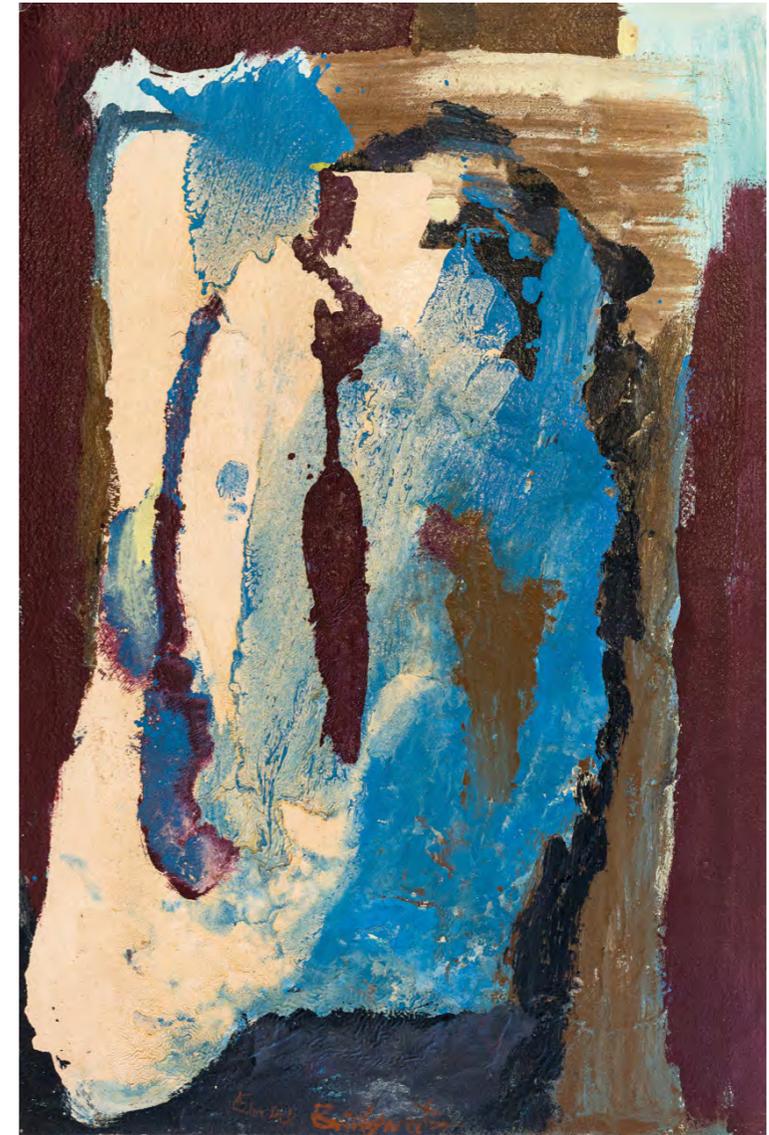
*Paradise Flycatcher*  
1956  
Gouache on paper  
14.2 x 19.3 cm  
5 5/8 x 7 5/8 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1942  
Watercolour  
24 x 30.8 cm  
9 1/2 x 12 1/8 inches



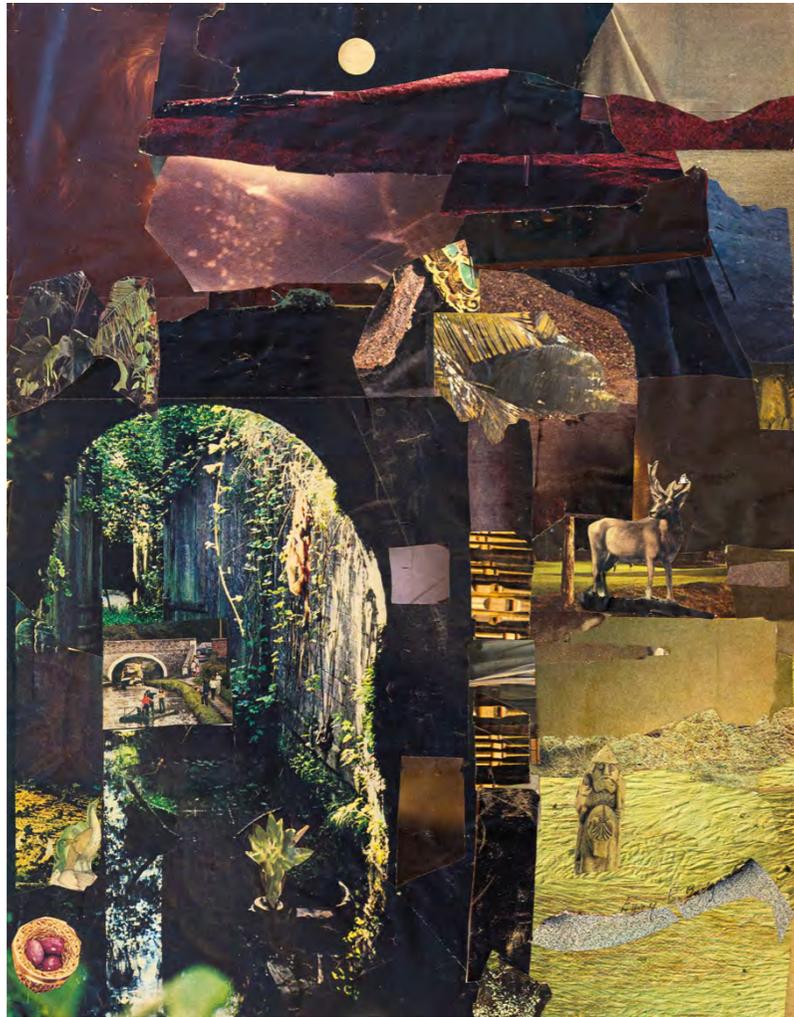
*The New Worlds*  
c.1958  
Oil on board  
26.5 x 77 cm  
10 3/8 x 30 1/4 inches



*Echoes*  
c.1958  
Oil on board  
60.7 x 41 cm  
23 7/8 x 16 1/8 inches



*Collage*



*Encounter*  
c.1970s  
Collage  
51 x 39.7 cm  
20 1/8 x 15 5/8 inches



*The Land of Birds*  
c.1950s  
Collage  
33 x 73.7 cm  
13 x 29 inches



*Sea Shore (Broad Campden)*  
 c. 1970s  
 Collage  
 40 x 45.5 cm  
 15 3/4 x 17 7/8 inches



*Garden of Pleasure*  
 c. 1970s  
 Collage and blue ink  
 45.5 x 45.5 cm  
 17 7/8 x 17 7/8 inches



*Untitled*  
c. 1970s  
Collage  
41.6 x 62.3 cm  
16 3/8 x 24 1/2 inches



*Pebble View*  
1944  
Collage  
30 x 45 cm  
11 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches

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| p. 15 <i>Footprints</i><br>c.1945<br>Oil on board<br>53.3 x 35.6 cm<br>21 x 14 inches                       | p. 27 <i>The End of the Marathon</i><br>c.1942<br>Pen and ink on paper<br>17.8 x 22.9 cm<br>7 x 9 inches | p. 33 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1945<br>Ink on paper<br>17.9 x 25.5 cm<br>7 x 10 inches             | <i>Bewitched</i><br>c.1955<br>Ink on paper<br>20.2 x 25.1 cm<br>8 x 9 7/8 inches                 | p. 50 <i>Paradise Flown</i><br>1956<br>Gouache on paper<br>14.2 x 19.3 cm<br>5 5/8 x 7 5/8 inches      | p. 60 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1970s<br>Collage<br>41.6 x 62.3 cm<br>16 3/8 x 24 1/2 inches                        |
| p. 17 <i>Night Time Phoenix</i><br>c.1945<br>Oil on board<br>39 x 56.5 cm<br>15 3/8 x 22 1/4 inches         | <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1945<br>Ink on paper<br>18.5 x 24.6 cm<br>7 1/4 x 9 3/4 inches                      | <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1945<br>Ink on paper<br>17.8 x 25.8 cm<br>7 x 10 1/8 inches               | p. 42 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1940s<br>Gouache on paper<br>18.5 x 24.3 cm<br>7 1/4 x 9 5/8 inches   | p. 51 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1942<br>Watercolour<br>24 x 30.8 cm<br>9 1/2 x 12 1/8 inches                | p. 61 <i>Pebble View</i><br>1944<br>Collage<br>30 x 45 cm<br>11 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches                            |
| p. 23 <i>Juxtaposition</i><br>c.1939<br>Pen and ink on paper<br>17.8 x 24.4 cm<br>7 x 9 5/8 inches          | p. 28 <i>Theory of Beauty</i><br>12 June 1942<br>Ink on paper<br>20.2 x 12.8 cm<br>8 x 5 inches          | p. 34 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1947<br>Ink on paper<br>23.3 x 29.3 cm<br>9 1/8 x 11 1/2 inches     | p. 43 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1940s<br>Gouache on paper<br>29.8 x 21 cm<br>11 3/4 x 8 1/4 inches    | p. 52 <i>The New Worlds</i><br>c.1958<br>Oil on board<br>26.5 x 77 cm<br>10 3/8 x 30 1/4 inches        |  |
| <i>Untitled (Indifference Tide)</i><br>c.1939<br>Pen and ink on paper<br>17.8 x 22.8 cm<br>7 x 9 inches     | <i>Untitled</i><br>1942<br>Ink on paper<br>20.6 x 13 cm<br>8 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches                          | <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1955<br>Ink on paper<br>21 x 29.8 cm<br>8 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches             | p. 44 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1940s<br>Gouache on paper<br>29.8 x 21 cm<br>11 3/4 x 8 1/4 inches    | p. 53 <i>Echoes</i><br>c.1958<br>Oil on board<br>60.7 x 41 cm<br>23 7/8 x 16 1/8 inches                |  |
| p. 24 <i>Meanings in the Round</i><br>c.1939<br>Pen and ink on paper<br>17.8 x 22.8 cm<br>7 x 9 inches      | p. 29 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1942<br>Ink on paper<br>20.5 x 12.8 cm<br>8 1/8 x 5 inches                    | p. 37 <i>Tête à Tête</i><br>1947<br>Ink on paper<br>21 x 29.8 cm<br>8 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches      | p. 45 <i>Revelation</i><br>c.1940s<br>Gouache on paper<br>35.5 x 25 cm<br>14 x 9 7/8 inches      | p. 56 <i>Encounter</i><br>c.1970s<br>Collage<br>51 x 39.7 cm<br>20 1/8 x 15 5/8 inches                 |  |
| <i>Part of me lives in the house</i><br>c.1939<br>Pen and ink on paper<br>17.8 x 24 cm<br>7 x 9 1/2 inches  | <i>Untitled</i><br>12 June 1942<br>Ink on paper<br>20.5 x 12.9 cm<br>8 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches                | <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1947<br>Ink on paper<br>17.6 x 25.3 cm<br>6 7/8 x 10 inches               | p. 46 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1940s<br>Gouache on paper<br>42.5 x 59.2 cm<br>16 3/4 x 23 1/4 inches | p. 57 <i>The Land of Birds</i><br>c.1950s<br>Collage<br>33 x 73.7 cm<br>13 x 29 inches                 |  |
| p. 26 <i>The Foundations of Behaviour</i><br>c.1940<br>Pen and ink on paper<br>15.2 x 23 cm<br>6 x 9 inches | p. 30 <i>Untitled</i><br>c.1942<br>Ink on paper<br>20.6 x 13 cm<br>8 1/8 x 5 1/8 inches                  | p. 39 <i>The Debutante</i><br>1955<br>Ink on paper<br>23.2 x 20.2 cm<br>9 1/8 x 8 inches       | p. 47 <i>Masked Mystery</i><br>1944<br>Gouache on paper<br>48 x 31 cm<br>18 7/8 x 12 1/4 inches  | p. 58 <i>Sea Shore (Broad Campden)</i><br>c.1970s<br>Collage<br>40 x 45.5 cm<br>15 3/4 x 17 7/8 inches |  |

*Emmy Bridgwater:  
A Family and Artistic Chronology*

Compiled by Lisa Rüll

14 July 1896

William Frith Bridgwater (age 31) of Edgbaston marries Kate Piercy Sanderson (age 28) of 15 Yew Tree Road, Edgbaston, at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on Bristol Road, Edgbaston. Charles Bridgwater, William's father, was a retired carpenter with residential property in Heeley Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

William Sanderson, Kate's father, had been a commercial traveller. He died before 1881 leaving a widow Elizabeth, a son (William) and four younger daughters (Kate Piercy was the eldest daughter). Earlier chronologies suggest that the Sandersons were a local family of artists. The 1881 census records Elizabeth Sanderson as a 'Ladies Outfitter'. William Frith Bridgwater moves with his wife to 29 Varna Road, Edgbaston.

30 June 1897

Bessie Bridgwater born at 29 Varna Road.

Before 1901

William and his family move to 42 Lee Crescent, Edgbaston next door to his parents at no 41.

3 June 1905

Katherine Bridgwater born at 42 Lee Crescent, Edgbaston

27 April 1906

Charles Bridgwater dies, leaving his widow, Emma, an estate value of £289 2 s. Much of this derives from the Heeley Road, Selly Oak property.

10 November 1906

Emma Frith Bridgwater (known as Emmy) born at 42 Lee Crescent.

1910

William and his family move to 1 Pakenham Road, Edgbaston. William's brother Joseph and wife Lilian Sara move to 42 Lee Crescent. William Frith Bridgwater listed in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham* 1910 as a chartered accountant.

1922 - 5

Emma (known as Emmy) studies art at Birmingham School of Arts and Crafts under Bernard Fleetwood-Walker.

1926 - 7

While living in Oxford, Bridgwater studies at the local art school (not The Ruskin). She also works part-time as a secretary for a small magazine edited by Hugh Chesterman.

June - July 1936

Bridgwater sees the International Surrealist Exhibition in London, which she describes as having a transforming effect on her art. Subsequently alters how she works, pursuing more intentionally surrealist forms.

1936 - 7

For short periods Bridgwater attends the Grosvenor School of Modern Art in London. Regularly returns to Birmingham to visit her family. Supports her artistic career by working as a secretary. Her closest Birmingham associates include Conroy Maddox and the Melvilles.



29 September - 11 October 1937

Bridgwater exhibits 3 oil paintings with The Birmingham Group in a mixed exhibition at the Lucy Wertheim Gallery, London whose site is beside the 'west front of the Royal Academy'.

7 - 19 March 1938

The Birmingham Group exhibition at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery includes work by Emmy Bridgwater.

14 July 1938

Roland Penrose draws up a membership list of 38 names for the Surrealist Group in England. There is no indication that Bridgwater was on this list (Remy, 1999, p. 147).

6 - 18 March 1939

Bridgwater exhibits with The Birmingham Group in *As We See Ourselves*, a mixed exhibition of portraits and self-portraits at the Chapman Galleries, 115 Broad Street in Birmingham. The show includes portraits by Bridgwater of Alice Coats and Conroy Maddox. A portrait of Bridgwater by Coats is also included.

Late 1930s

Bridgwater is described as having been included in London Gallery exhibitions, having been introduced to E.L.T. Mesens by Robert Melville.

1940

Previous chronologies typically report this as the date Bridgwater joins the Surrealist Group, in England. Bridgwater's close friend Edith Rimmington, another surrealist artist, keeps her informed of activities during Bridgwater's stays in Birmingham. Both begin attending Surrealist Group meetings at venues such as the Barcelona Restaurant in Soho.

Late 1941

Bridgwater moves to London.

By 1942

*Emmy Bridgwater*, Jack Bilbo's Modern Gallery, off Oxford Street, London (first one-woman show)

March 1942

*Arson: An Ardent Review* is published, with a discussion of Bridgwater's work by Toni del Renzio.

Before summer 1942

Bridgwater has a brief romance with Toni del Renzio. She continues to regularly visit her family in Birmingham.

18 April 1943

William Frith Bridgwater dies.

Before summer 1943

Bridgwater moves to 35 Lancaster Gate, London W2.

1 August 1943

Bridgwater applies to join the Artists' International Association (A.I.A.).

July 1944

Bridgwater contributes collaborative work with Edith Rimmington to *Fulcrum* (edited by Feyyaz Fergar).

12 September 1945

Bridgwater is one of the surrealists who sign up to the reactivated 'Surrealist Group in England', meeting at the Barcelona restaurant in London.

Summer 1946

Bridgwater contributes prose work *The Birds* and illustrations to *Free Unions Libres* (edited by Simon Watson Taylor).

October 1946

Bridgwater is one of sixty-seven questionnaire respondents for *Savoir Vivre*, published in Brussels.

10 - 17 May 1947

Bridgwater and other Birmingham surrealists are included in the 25th Coventry Art Circle exhibition at Anslows premises, High Street, Coventry. Bridgwater's pictures include *The Absence of the Birds*.

June 1947

Through ELT Mesens's London Gallery, Bridgwater sends work, including *Listen to the Sound of Machinery*, to the last 'official' international surrealist exhibition at Galerie Maeght, Paris at the invitation of André Breton. Bridgwater signs the Declaration of the English Group of Surrealists. Whilst continuing with her art, Bridgwater cares for her elderly mother and her disabled sister in Birmingham.

Before 30 June 1947

Bridgwater is unregistered for voting rights at in Edgbasten and is usually assumed to have moved 'permanently' to London. However, given participation in Coventry exhibitions and the disintegration of relations amongst the surrealists in London, she may have moved elsewhere in the Midlands region or was not included on the list for registration due to her presence in Paris.

1 - 8 November 1947

Bridgwater and other Birmingham surrealists are included in the 26th Coventry Art Circle exhibition, again at Anslows. According to the catalogue she showed four works: two Untitled, plus *The Face of the Tree* and *The Performance is About to Start*.

After 1947

Exhibits with the A.I.A. in at least one of the post-1947 exhibitions.

1948

A short manifesto from the surrealist group in Birmingham is sent to E.L.T. Mesens. Bridgwater is not a signatory.

21 - 28 August 1948

Bridgwater and other Birmingham surrealists are included in the Coventry Art Circle exhibition at the Electricity Showrooms, Corporation Street, Coventry.

February 1949

*Birmingham Artists Committee Invitation Exhibition*, Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, Birmingham.

January 1951

Birmingham surrealists are included in the 29th Coventry Art Circle exhibition. Bridgwater takes on more responsibility for the care of her family.

By 1953

Moves with mother, and two sisters to 29 Loxley Road, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

By 1958

Family moves to 57a Rother Street, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

1963

*In Kelly's Directory for Stratford* (1963/64 volume) the list of private residents only lists Emmy Bridgwater and sister Bessie at 57a Rother Street.

September quarter 1963

Marriage of Katherine Bridgwater and childhood family friend George Frederick Jenkinson registered in Stratford. The couple move to 211 Tennial Road, Birmingham.

1970's

Bridgwater begins to work in collage.

1971

*Britain 's Contribution to Surrealism of the 30's and 40's*, Hamet Gallery, London.

June quarter 1974

The death of Bessie Bridgwater is registered in Warwickshire.

1982

*Peinture Surrealiste en Angleterre 1930-1960: Les Enfants d'Alice*, Galerie 1900-2000, Paris.

1985

*A Salute to British Surrealism 1930-1950*, at The Minories, Colchester, Blond Fine Art, London, and Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

*British Women Surrealists*, Blond Fine Art, London

By 10 October 1985

Bridgwater moves to her sister Katherine's house at 211 Tennial Road, Birmingham.

1986

To coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition, Bridgwater's works are shown in exhibitions across Britain: *Surrealism in England 1936 and After*, Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury School of Art, (and tour); *Contrariwise, Surrealism and Britain 1930-1986*, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, *Swansea and tour*; *Surrealism in Britain in the Thirties: Angels of Anarchy and Machines for Making Clouds*, Leeds City Art Gallery.

1987

*Surrealismi*, Retretti Art Centre, Suomi, Finland.

1988

*I Surrealisti*, Palazzo Reale, Milan, Italy (also shown in a smaller form as *Die Surrealisten*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany).

1989

*British Surrealism*, Blond Fine Art, London.

1990

*Emmy Bridgwater*, Blond Fine Art, London.

August 1990

Bridgwater is interviewed by Katy Deepwell and Deborah Sugg at a Solihull Nursing Home. The subsequent article is published in *Women 's Art Magazine*.

1991

*The Birmingham Surrealist Group*, John Bonham, Murray Feely Fine Art, London.

1992

*Ten Decades - Ten Women Artists born 1897-1906* (curated by Katy Deepwell), Norwich Gallery

*The Foundations of Behaviour*, John Bonham, Murray Feely Fine Art, London

1995

*Real Surreal: British and European Surrealism*, Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

1996

*Emmy Bridgwater / Conroy Maddox: The Last Surrealists*, Blond Fine Art, London;

*The Inner Eye* (curated by Marina Warner), National Touring Exhibitions (through to 1997).

13 March 1999

Emmy Bridgwater dies in Solihull

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*Emmy Bridgwater and "The Spaces Where Swallows Try Their Turns"* © Tor Scott

*Lost and Found: Family, Mythology and Emmy Bridgwater* © Lisa Rüll

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