order to render emotionally bearable the weight of recent political history.

This is not to say that there is nothing ineffable or abstract in Finlay's worldview. Among the most dazzling pieces on display here is the poem-print *Evening / Sail* (1970; Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay; no.2), with its elegiac and mysterious prophecy 'Evening will come – they will sew the blue sail'. Also noteworthy is the great late sequence *Reef-Points* (1996; Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay; no.33), a series of luminous, patterned prints somewhat in the spirit of mid-twentieth-century Concrete Art, playing on the visual appeal of 'reef-points' – 'small flat pieces of plaited cordage or soft rope [for] tying up the sail in the act of reefing', as explained in the list of works. It is for the oceanic mysteries, the moments of deep revery that Finlay's practice can afford us, and not only for the luminous flashes of delight as a riddle is unravelled, that this exhibition is worth visiting.

1 Catalogue: *Marine: Ian Hamilton Finlay*. By Stephen Bann *et al.*: 54 pp. incl. 32 col. ills. (Museum & Galleries Edinburgh, 2021), £10. ISBN 978-0-900353-3-69.

Paula Rego

Tate Britain, London
7th July–24th October

by **GILL HEDLEY**

Arguably the two best-known Portuguese artists of the twentieth century are women: Maria Helena Vieria da Silva and Paula Rego. Both lived during António de Oliveira Salazar's dictatorship, moved abroad, married a fellow artist, had a career that outshone their husband's and have museums dedicated to them in Portugal. As a painter, Rego redefined figuration and is now considered to be one of the most distinctive artists of her time.

In 2009 the Casa das Histórias Paula Rego, a museum dedicated to the artist, opened in the town of Cascais, near Lisbon; the Portuguese word *histórias* embraces the meaning of story, history, fable, legend and narrative. Rego's focus on storytelling, where the personal is also political, has also made her a national treasure in her adoptive country of Britain, where she studied and has worked for seven decades. In the same year Rego produced *Escape* (private collection; cat. p.208) – the final work on show in the magnificent retrospective of the artist at Tate Britain, London – which is part of a print series on female genital mutilation.[1] Produced by the artist nearly sixty years earlier at the age of fifteen, the first work to greet the viewer, *Interrogation* (p.68; Fig.22) makes plain and painful Rego's very early comprehension of the psychological as well as physiological impact of torture of all kinds, political and emotional. This theme, implicit or explicit, recurs throughout this chronological survey – one that guides us through her lifelong preoccupation with power and its misuse.

22. *Interrogation*, by Paula Rego. 1950. Oil on canvas, 50.5 by 61 cm. (Private collection; © Paula Rego; exh. Tate Britain, London).

When Paula Rego was one year old, her father's job took her parents away to England for nearly three years, leaving her in the care of her grandmother. In 1939 the family moved to the coast near Lisbon, by which time she was entranced by the language and imagery of Portuguese folk stories and fairy tales. Her parents later sent her to an English language school in Lisbon and, subsequently, to be 'finished' in Kent. Her mother trained as an artist and her father was an engineer; they were both Anglophile, anti-fascist and anti-Catholic, but Rego did not share their view of England. She visited Frinton-on-Sea, the prim coastal town in Essex where her parents had lived, and was not impressed; nor did she enjoy her finishing school. She left for London in 1952 to study at the Slade School of Fine Art, aged sixteen. Soon she met the painter Victor Willing and, aged twenty-one, left England with him to live in Portugal, which was still under Salazar's dictatorship. Until the mid-1970s Rego, Willing and their children lived between London and Portugal but Rego has never been strictly Anglo-Portuguese in her outlook. Her deep knowledge of art, literature, music, cinema and her travels in a wider Europe are too often overlooked. About halfway through the exhibition a particularly magisterial watercolour, the *Return of the native* (1993; p.166),

towers at 2.5 metres tall. Two women lie on a vertiginous edge in a landscape more akin to Brontë than Hardy, with wildflowers in profusion. The scale and tension is far removed from the English watercolour tradition and it belongs, aptly, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Portugal.

The changes in scale and materials in Rego's works are intelligently explored by the curators, Elena Crippa and Zuzana Flašková, and displayed here with elegance. Although Rego's drawings, prints and sculptural props, which she calls dollies, are given due attention, the galleries are rightly dominated by the artist's early collages, large acrylic and watercolour paintings, and her powerful pastels, most notably the explosive series that depicts the impact of illegal abortions on women. Dating from the 1960s and 1970s, Rego's collages are intuitive and tactile, and were succeeded by large, richly colourful acrylics during the 1980s. In these paintings, animals take on anthropomorphic talents and perversions and little girls emerge as the lead characters – rebels with insidious strengths. Later, within this repertory company of characters, human groups begin to dominate, as seen in a series of Rego's major paintings completed between 1986 and 1988. In 1988 they were shown at solo exhibitions in Lisbon, Oporto and, to great acclaim, at the Serpentine Gallery, London. This was also the year her husband died. The series was later completed by *The dance* (1988; Tate; p.135), in which Willing appears as two ambivalent characters in the swing and play of partners; his name must surely be one of the most interesting examples of nominative determinism.

In *The cadet and his sister* (p.129; Fig.21) a young man in his new blue army uniform has his shoelaces tied by an older sister, who is formally dressed in scarlet with sensible shoes. Each object is symbolic: her open handbag and large square gloves take on sexual overtones in conjunction with the toy cock under the bench on which the boy sits. He gazes dreamily towards a steep path, bordered by trees. To a British viewer, the vista and the emphasis on siblings and shoes irresistibly recalls a 1960s Clarks' shoes advertising poster, depicting two children, hand-in-hand, starting out along just such a path in new footwear. The subject of *The policeman's daughter* (1987; private collection, London; p.127) polishes her father's jackboot, with her arm plunged inside up to the elbow, so that it resembles a perverse evening glove. The characters in *The dance* are distinguished by their shoes: it is clear who is from country or town, from past or present. Elsewhere Rego's figures wear slippers, summer espadrilles, polished brogues, pumps with bows or high heels, and leather boots are used as a powerful shorthand for masculine power.

21. *The cadet and his sister*, by Paula Rego. 1988. Acrylic on paper on canvas, 214.3 by 152 cm. (Private collection; © Paula Rego; exh. Tate Britain, London).

23. ***The artist in her studio*****, by Paula Rego. 1993. Acrylic on canvas, 180 by 130 cm. (Leeds Art Gallery; © Paula Rego; exh. Tate Britain, London; Bridgeman Images).**

In 1990, Rego became the first Associate Artist at the National Gallery, London. Initially she refused the invitation, not able to see the ease with which she would respond to and subvert the rich material on offer. In *Time – past and present* (1990; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; p.141), an early work in her residency, a young girl sketches while an old man, in a room full of old master paintings, sits smiling. He wears comfortable slip-on shoes. He is at ease; she must study. In *The artist in her studio* (p.142; Fig.23) she is now booted, legs apart, smoking a pipe, dominating her own studio paraphernalia and a still life of Portuguese cabbages.

After her beloved father died in 1966 and Willing was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Rego suffered severe depression and began Jungian analysis, which she continued for forty years. In the 1980s the au pair Lila Nunes came from Portugal to help care for Willing and quickly became a collaborator and model for Rego. In the series *Dog women* (1994; pp.152–53), Nunes, shown barefoot, becomes an embodiment of the ideas that dominated Rego's thinking after Willing's death: the dog, loyal, needy, wild, sexual and aggressive, stands as a symbol for primal, female needs. In *Possession* (pp.184–91), a series from 2004, Nunes rests, writhes or sprawls on the tan leather couch that once belonged to Rego's analyst; the couch's geometric padding adds a strange abstraction to the figure in a dark red dress, who changes her position but never her appearance – like a stop-start animation.

Rego has made prints all her life, stating that she does so whenever she gets 'stuck': 'to free up my mind and let me just work without making art'.[2] Printmaking, psychoanalysis, working with Nunes as an alter ego and using the lexicon of folklore are all processes that underpin her imagination. This retrospective – from *Interrogation* to *Escape* – presents a lifetime of images that are subversive, ribald and glorious.

1 Catalogue: *Paula Rego.* Edited by Elena Crippa, with contributions by Zuzana Flašková, Maria Manuel Lisboa, Minna Moore Ede, Giulia Smith, Laura Stamps and Marina Warner. 240 pp. incl. 150 col. ills. (Tate, London, 2021), £25. ISBN 978–1–84976–752–1.
2 See S. Lindo: exh. cat. *Paula Rego: An Enduring Journey, A Life in Print*, London (Cristea Roberts Gallery) 2021, p.24. A parallel exhibition at Cristea Roberts Gallery, on view until 11th September 2021, is a significant complement to the Tate retrospective, including drawings and prints that have been editioned in the last year.

Museum of the Home

London
from 12th June

by **TANYA HARROD**

In January 2018 the Museum of the Home, in Shoreditch, east London, closed. It was then called the Geffrye Museum, since it occupies almshouses built in 1714–15 using funds bequeathed by Sir Robert