

VNY *La Voce di New York*

— *america Oggi* 1988 —

Editor in Chief: Giampaolo Pioli

The First Italian English Digital Daily in the US

English Editor: Grace Russo Bullaro

☰ ENGLISH EDITION NEWS NEW YORK U.N. PEOPLE ENTERTAINMENT ARTS LIFESTYLES FOOD & WINE TRAVEL BUSINESS SPORTS ITALIAN EDITION 🔍



Arts

April 26, 2026

“Peggy Guggenheim in London”: The Making of a Collector

The exhibition will be on till October 19, 2026 in the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni in Venice



Italian Hours

Lucy Gordan



A photograph taken in 1939 by Gisèle Freund of Peggy Guggenheim and art critic Herbert Read, who was her purchase advisor and would have been the director of her London Museum. All photos courtesy of the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation

On display until October 19 at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni in Venice, which had been her home/museum from 1949 until her death in 1979, is “Peggy Guggenheim in London: The Making of a Collector.” It’s the first and most comprehensive museum exhibition ever devoted to Peggy Guggenheim’s London experience and to her very first gallery, “Guggenheim Jeune.”

Located at 30 Cork Street for eighteen months, between January 1938 and June 1939, the press release tells us, “Guggenheim Jeune’ became a key point of reference for the European avant-gardes, distinguishing itself through the promotion of local and international artists associated with abstraction and Surrealism. Set against a backdrop of extraordinary creative vitality and mounting historical tensions, the gallery anticipated developments that would profoundly shape twentieth-century art,” not to mention Guggenheim’s formation as a collector and art patron.



Dominant Curve by Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944), April 1936, on loan from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York

Guggenheim opened “Guggenheim Jeune” with an exhibition of Jean Cocteau drawings. It was followed by another nineteen, many of which were curatorial firsts: of Vasily Kandinsky (his first solo exhibition in England), Yves Tanguy, Wolfgang Paalen, and several other well-known and lesser-known artists. She also held group exhibitions of sculpture and collage (the first in England), as well as one of works by children, which included a painting by the very young Lucian Freud, marking his exhibition debut. Among these exhibitors were Antoine Pevsner, Henry Moore, Henri Laurens, Alexander Calder, Raymond Duchamp-Villon (brother of her close friend and mentor Marcel), Constantin Brâncuși, John Ferren, Jean Arp, Max Ernst (who was her second husband from 1941-46), Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Kurt Schwitters.

Peggy Guggenheim also began to collect works herself, often purchasing at least one artwork from every exhibition at “Guggenheim Jeune,” for it had been her ambition to found a contemporary art museum in London. Her desire was certainly influenced by her uncle Solomon, who two years earlier had created his namesake Foundation in New York to collect and further the production of abstract art.

“Peggy Guggenheim in London” brings together about one hundred significant artworks from international institutions and private collections. It features works that had been displayed in “Guggenheim Jeune,” alongside later works by Jean



Behind the Mirror by Rita Kern-Larsen, 1937, on loan from Kunstmuseet in Tonder, Denmark.

Arp, Kandinsky, and Yves Tanguy; works created in those two years by artists not exhibited at “Guggenheim Jeune”; and works by artists Guggenheim would later buy for her own collection, including Eileen Agar, Barbara Hepworth, Rita Kern-Larsen, Piet Mondrian, Henry Moore, Cedric Morris, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. The media of these artworks include paintings, sculptures, works on paper, photographs, puppets, and archival materials.

Aside from this wide variety of artworks, “Guggenheim in London” aims to highlight her friendships and collaborations with key figures of “modern art”: Arp, Irish playwright Samuel Beckett, Marcel Duchamp, Surrealist Roland Penrose, art critic Herbert Read, and American artist and bookbinder Mary Reynolds, not to omit many gallerists and intellectuals in London during that year and a half.

“Guggenheim in London” opens with key works of Abstraction and Surrealism displayed at “Guggenheim Jeune.” These are followed by works by Kandinsky; Russian/French artist Marie Vassiliéff, creator of the “artistic doll” genre; painters Welsh Cedric Morris and American Charles Howard; German sculptor Hein Henghes; and Studio 17, the engraving laboratory founded by Stanley William Hayter.

An homage to the historic London 1936 exhibition “Abstract and Concrete” follows, with works by Mondrian, Taeuber-Arp, and Van Doesburg, not to omit color photographic portraits by Gisèle Freund, originally projected on the wall at “Guggenheim Jeune.” The final rooms are dedicated to the gallery’s collage and Surrealist artists.

After Venice, the exhibition will travel to the Royal Academy of Arts in London from November 21, 2026, to March 14, 2027, and then to the Guggenheim Museum in New York from April 16 to September 12, 2027—three appropriate venues, for Peggy Guggenheim was born and grew up in New York City, lived 30 years in Venice, where she opened her world-famous museum, but in a 1976 interview declared: “I’ve been in love with Venice for 50 years, but, if I didn’t live here, I’d live in the English countryside.”



Equilibrium by Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943), 1932, on loan from Stiftung Arpe V., Berlin/Rolandswerth

 Share on Facebook

 Share on Twitter

 



Lucy Gordan

Italian Hours

Former editor at the American Academy in Rome and at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, with journalistic accreditation in Italy and the Vatican, I'm culture editor of the US monthly Inside t...