

Sir Matthew Smith, CBE (22 October 1879 – 29 September 1959)

Sir Matthew Smith was born into an affluent family in Halifax, he worked for several years in his father's factory and was expected to join the family business manufacturing wire. He chose instead to study design at the Municipal School of Technology, Manchester to study industrial design between 1900 and 1904.

He then studied at the Slade School of Fine Art , one of the most progressive art schools of the day, from 1905 to 1907 where he was pronounced to be lacking in talent.

From 1910 he studied in Paris under Henri Matisse and acquired an interest in Fauvism and the post-Impressionists. Smith began exhibiting at the at the Salon des Independent in 1911 and then went on to exhibit widely. Smith was a rich colourist (uncommon amongst English painters) whose work owed much both to his years in France and the Fauve tradition.

Painting landscapes, still-life and figures, he applied the paint in bold, swift brushstrokes evolving a distinctive, vigorous style recognisably his own.

During World War I, he was wounded at the Battle of Passchendaele.

In 1949, Smith was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

Smith lived, worked, and exhibited in England and France and his achievements were recognised with a retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1953. He was knighted in 1954.

“Art for him was not the laboured manipulation of paint on dreary themes but a celebration of life despite tragedies and ill-health. The colour orchestrations of blood-reds, blues, turquoise, mauves with unexpected yellows and greens, made his paintings, when hung adjacently to Van Gogh, Matisse, Bonnard, and the Fauve Derain in the Tate Gallery, the right place to be, amidst the ‘Masters of Colour’”.



























