

① Alfred Wallis

Outsider and Marginalised Artist Workshop Pack



Alfred Wallis, *Boat*, 1930
Bishop Otter Gallery, Chichester University



Alfred Wallis (1855-1942)

Alfred Wallis was born in Plymouth, Devon in 1855. His father was from Devon and his mother, who was Cornish, died a few years after Wallis was born. The family eventually moved to Penzance in Cornwall. According to Wallis, poverty in his childhood meant he had to find employment at the age of nine, as a cabin-boy on a deep-sea fishing boat, and he claimed that he continued to work on these schooners as a seaman, sailing in the North Atlantic to catch fish, on voyages that could last for weeks.

Wallis married Susan Ward in around 1875. Her eldest son, George, was his best friend. She was 21 years his senior and the mother of five children. The death of both his two children with Susan seemed to convince Wallis that he should change to inshore fishing as a means of earning an income, in order to work closer to home. The family moved to St Ives in 1890 and Wallis gave up fishing altogether, to work as a marine scrap merchant until his retirement.

In 1922, after the death of his wife, Wallis took up painting to occupy himself. A few years later his paintings were noticed by Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood who had recently moved to St Ives. They found his approach to art inspiring and introduced him to their circle of artists who appreciated and were influenced by his paintings.

Alfred Wallis painted from memory with a clarity and simplicity of design. He found perspective meaningless, but the detail on a ship's rigging essential. Proportion was often based on the importance of that object to the scene. He used simple irregular scraps of cardboard and wood as supports for his pictures and painted with yacht paint. The paintings were based on events or experiences and occasionally he would write a note on the painting to describe the picture.



Christopher Wood, *Alfred Wallis meets Ben Nicholson, 1928*, Photograph



Alfred Wallis, *Four Boats by a Lighthouse*, On loan to Pallant House Gallery



Ben Nicholson, *January 4 1953 (Thorpe, Wharfedale in snow)*
On loan to Pallant House Gallery
© Angela Verren Taunt



Christopher Wood, *China Dogs in a St. Ives Window*, 1926, On loan to Pallant House Gallery
© Pallant House Gallery



Ways of working for a painting

- Select either an image by the artist or an image you have found. This could be of something important to you.
- Search around for suitable scraps of wood, card, household emulsion, gloss and enamel paint.
- The wood or card (e.g. the inside of a cereal packet) forms the base for your painting and should be an irregular or uneven shape.
- The paints can be mixed if you need to extend the range of your colours. Check the solvents used in the paints before mixing and take any precautions necessary.
- Try not to use perspective in your painting; keep buildings, people, boats etc. flat and without shadows.





Step Up!

Step Up Is an innovative project funded through Renaissance and Surrey, East and West Sussex Museums Development Service. It is both a training opportunity for marginalised and outsider artists to lead workshops and a dedicated piece of research in to the collections at Pallant House Gallery in to the lives, stories, impact and work of outsider and marginalised artists. Motif produced as part of Step Up workshops.



Alfred Wallis, *Grey Schooner*, n.d.
On loan to Pallant House Gallery