

Out of Hours Exhibition

Health and the Body: the Ingram Collection at the RCGP

*The Royal College of General Practitioners,
30 Euston Square, London, free entry,
3 March 2016–29 May 2016*

A MEDICAL STORY IN THE HOME OF GENERAL PRACTICE

For the inaugural art exhibition at 30 Euston Square, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has borrowed from the collection of Chris Ingram, which focuses on 20th-century British artists, with several contemporaneous pieces from when the College was founded. The show gives us an insight into how the bright young things of their day grappled with the issues, as did the founders of our College, in a brave new world; both struggled with how to respond to a recently scarred and traumatised post-war society. Many of the images we see depict damaged people, but behind the veneer are the same characters, familiar to all of us in our day-to-day practice.

In the central hall you are met by *Riace Figure III* by Dame Elisabeth Frink. Tall and athletic, it is hard not to be impressed by his physique, and yet he wears a white

Elisabeth Frink's Riace Figure III, at the RCGP.
Photographer: Wilde Fry/RCGP.



John Davies's Head of a Man, at the RCGP. Photographer: Wilde Fry/RCGP.

mask as if from a Greek tragedy play. What is he hiding and what is his hidden agenda? Nearby is another Frink, *Walking Madonna*, by contrast a frail older woman walking purposefully forward and like so many strong-willed patients I meet. There is also a deeply personal mother and child sculpture by Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, and two paintings by William Roberts depicting everyday life (*Saturday Night*, also known as *At the Local*), and *The Swimming Bath*).

The public café and entrance spaces at the RCGP are an interesting, if challenging, backdrop for an exhibition. The beautiful interior with its distinctive green and cream tiles distract you at times from some of the pieces while the busy working café means that some of the art is easily missed. The other test for the show is the audience: this is not a usual gallery crowd; most will stumble across the works by accident and may not view the whole exhibition. A first for the College, and a confident step in what might become a regular programme, its success is to place powerful and important artworks in an unexpected place, challenging non-art-lovers to stop

and engage with these pieces and inviting visitors into the RCGP, demystifying general practice through the power of art.

I will be surprised if any visiting GP will not recognise the circle of life within the exhibition and reflect how much, but also how little, has changed in the last 60 years.

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<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/news/2016/march/a-story-of-medicine-told-in-the-home-of-general-practice.aspx>

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