

Title:

Beryl Cook's art - quirky UK artist

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Summary:

Beryl Cook 's life and her approach to art

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Article Body:

Beryl Cook is one of Britain's most talented and amusing artists .Beryl's pictures feature women of all shapes and sizes enjoying themselves .Born between the two world wars, Beryl Cook eventually left Kendrick School in Reading at the age of 15, where she went to secretarial school and then into an insurance office. After moving to London and then Hampton, she eventually married her next door neighbour from Reading, John Cook. He was an officer in the Merchant Navy and after he left the sea in 1956, they bought a pub for a year before John took a job in Southern Rhodesia with a motor company. Beryl bought their young son a box of watercolours, and when showing him how to use it, she decided that she herself quite enjoyed painting. John subsequently bought her a child's painting set for her birthday and it was with this that she produced her first significant work, a half-length portrait of a dark-skinned lady with a vacant expression and large drooping breasts. It was aptly named 'Hangover' by Beryl's husband and still hangs in their house today.

In 1964 Beryl Cook and her husband returned to the UK settling first in Cornwall and then later in Plymouth where, during the summer months, Beryl ran a boarding house for holidaymakers on the seafront. Beryl had now been painting for a number of years, basing her pictures on her everyday observations of people around her. By 1975 she had amassed numerous paintings that covered the walls of their boarding house. A friend took away a dozen or so and, to Beryl's surprise, managed to sell them all for around £10 each. Beryl was delighted and quickly increased her production. Her success came to the attention of Bernard Samuels at the Plymouth Arts Centre who persuaded her to mount her first exhibition featuring 75 paintings. It was a sell out. The rest, as they say, is history.

An article quickly appeared in the Sunday Times Magazine, followed by exhibitions at the Whitechapel and Portal Galleries in London. Her first book

'The Works' was published in 1978. Her paintings were then reproduced as greeting cards and limited edition prints and soon her work was being featured around the world, tickling ribs from Kingston to the Cape, and generating considerable popular acclaim.

This popular acclaim has been accompanied by serious critical appreciation, most notably with the inclusion of her painting in the fifth Peter Moores exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool where she was seen in the context of mainstream contemporary art, alongside Bridges Riley and Victor Passmore. The new Glasgow Museum of Modern Art has also recently purchased some of her original work, ensuring her a place in the annals of British Art. Beryl Cook continues to paint and has recently moved from Plymouth to Bristol, to be near her family"