

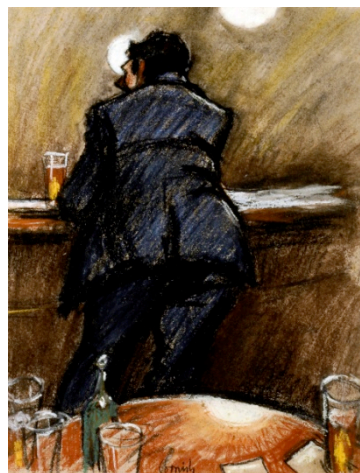
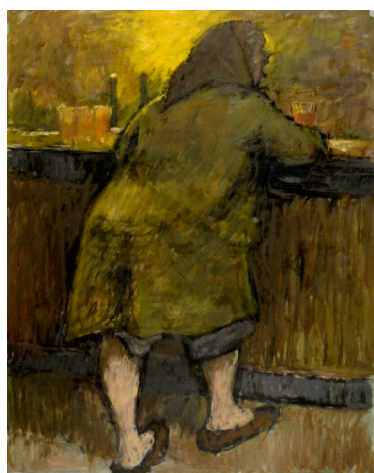
PRESS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY GALLERY AND BARING WING , NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY, SANDYFORD ROAD,
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 8ST

30 October – 24 December 2009 NORMAN CORNISH AT NINETY

Described as the master of the informal portrait and the unguarded moment, Norman Cornish has been capturing the world around his native Spennymoor in County Durham for almost eight decades. Widely acknowledged as one of the most important artists to have emerged from the region in the post-war years, Cornish (born 18 November 1919), won his first drawing prize at the age of four, was apprenticed at the age of 14 at the Dean and Chapter Colliery (colloquially known as the Butcher's Shop) and soon afterwards enrolled at the Spennymoor Sketching Club. By the age of 47, after 33 years working in the pit, he took the great risk of living by his painting.

His "narrow world" as the novelist (and fellow miner) Sid Chaplin described it is one where below ground the shapes of the miners echoed the "musculature" of the pit, while above ground he recorded "pigeon crees and allotments, pit rows and pubs, fish and chip vans and market stalls" and "off-shift miners squatting on their hunkers and soaking in the sunshine and the good crack".



Self-Portrait with Spectacles, Oil on board 61 x 51cm
© Northumbria University Gallery, Permanent Collection.

Woman at Bar, Oil on paper 62 x 50cm;
Men at Bar with Dog, Oil pastel on paper 72 x 53.5cm;
Man at Bar, Oil pastel on paper 31 x 24cm
© Norman Cornish/Northumbria University Gallery

Cornish's achievements have been considerable. He has been the subject of several networked documentaries and films, first appearing in 1963 in Melvyn Bragg's BBC's documentary series 'Two Border Artists' with Sheila Fell, and later in 1989 alongside Stanley Spencer and Graham Sutherland. He has carried out countless commissions; exhibited widely and has work in many major public and private collections.

In 2008 he was awarded an MBE and is now the sole distinguished survivor of the Sennymoor Settlement, that enlightened educational and cultural project of the late 1930's that enabled a rich broadening of his artistic horizons.

Without diminishing the harsh realities of life and work during those years, his paintings create a sense of time and place and for all that the mines have closed, his work continues to be an enduring testament to a community whose spirit survives triumphantly. In his autobiography Cornish wrote, "The collieries have gone, together with the pit road. Many of the old streets, chapels and pubs are no more. A large number of the ordinary but fascinating people who frequented these places are gone. However, in my memory, and I hope in my drawings, they live on. I simply close my eyes and they all spring to life"



30 October – 24 December 2009

Norman Cornish at Ninety

University Gallery, Northumbria University,
Sandyford Road
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST

Monday to Thursday 10am to 5pm,
Friday and Saturday 10am to 4pm
Closed Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Admission Free

Exhibition closes 1pm, 24 December 2009

Further details from Mara-Helen Wood

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Man Standing with Pint, Pastel on paper, 50.8 x 35.7cm
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TOURING: 5 March – 23 April 2010, Kings Place Gallery, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9AG

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