

PRESS RELEASE

***Dreaming in the Margins:
The Complete Graphic Works of Toyen***

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Richard Saltoun Gallery London



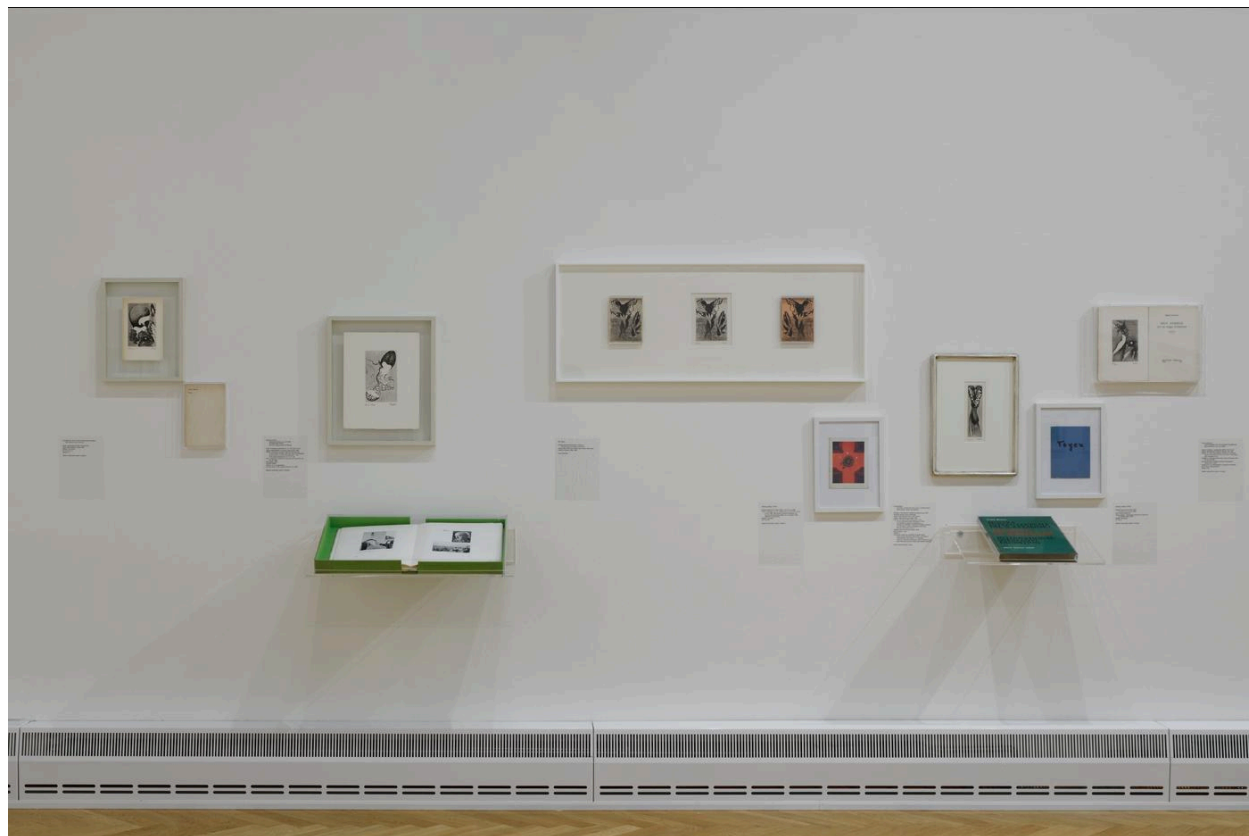
Cache-toi guerre! [Hide, War!], 1947

Richard Saltoun Gallery presents *Dreaming in the Margins: The Complete Graphic Works of Toyen*, the first UK exhibition dedicated to the extensive graphic production of TOYEN (1902–1980), one of the most enigmatic figures in twentieth-century Surrealism. Featuring a museum-quality collection of 78 items—including illustrated books, prints, drawings, catalogues and two original works—the exhibition offers the most complete overview of Toyen's graphic work

RICHARD SALTOUN

ever assembled, revealing a body of work that runs parallel to, and is inseparable from, her painting practice.

The exhibition follows two recent institutional presentations devoted to this underexplored dimension of Toyen's work: *Toyen: Die Pariser Jahre* at the Ludwig Museum, Koblenz (2023), and *Toyen: Books Without Borders* at the Gallery of Fine Arts, Ostrava (2024).



Toyen: Books Without Borders at the Gallery of Fine Arts, Ostrava (2024).

Though widely celebrated for her Surrealist paintings and drawings, Toyen's artistic contribution is far broader. She viewed the graphic arts not as peripheral, but as a vital extension of her imagination and politics—pursuing, through them, a lifelong search for freedom: political, sexual, and artistic. Books and graphics were central to her artistic identity from the outset of her career. Early collaborations with Czech poet and painter Jindřich Štyrský in interwar Prague gave rise to a visual language charged with eroticism, ambiguity and political resistance. Her devotion to the book form endured across decades and geographies—culminating in her later collaborations with the French poet and philosopher Annie Le Brun. Toyen designed book covers, bindings and

illustrations for various publishers in Prague and Paris, and her work in this field gained recognition as early as the 1930s.

Organised into two sections, *Dreaming in the Margins* opens with 14 rare works from 1930 to 1939, a period shaped by her relationship with Štyrský and the looming threat of war. These early prints, illustrated books and catalogues explore themes of eroticism and rebellion, reflecting Toyen's engagement with Surrealism and anti-fascist resistance.

The second and most substantial section begins in 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War, and includes what is arguably the most complete collection of Toyen's graphic work from this period. It traces her output during the war years in Prague and throughout her subsequent decades in Paris. The section includes 64 items—illustrated books, prints, exhibition catalogues, periodicals and posters—many of which are not recorded in Toyen's existing print catalogue raisonné. The collection features 107 prints by Toyen, of which 34 are hand-coloured, along with two original works. It also comprises 32 prints by other contemporary artists that were published alongside Toyen's contributions, offering a broader view of the publishing and poetic networks she participated in. Only three minor items from her catalogue raisonné are absent: an exhibition catalogue, an announcement for a periodical, and one unidentified publication.

In 1947, Toyen relocated permanently to Paris, where she became an active member of the Surrealist group, sharing in its fate alongside her longtime friends André Breton and Benjamin Péret. In her new home, her relationship with bookmaking shifted: no longer a commercial endeavour, it became an intimate, collaborative and poetic pursuit. She focused largely on illustrating her friends' poetry and theoretical writings, often published as small-run fine press books. These works were never secondary but formed an integral part of her output, regularly exhibited alongside her paintings in leading private galleries in Paris.

For Toyen, the book was a space of transformation—a container not for narrative resolution, but for ambiguity, fracture and exchange. Her visual interventions haunt rather than illustrate; they dissolve the boundaries between word and image, reader and viewer. *Dreaming in the Margins* reclaims a vital thread of the artist's legacy. Through this extraordinary and deeply personal body of work, the exhibition traces an artist who placed freedom at the heart of her practice, and who used the book as a space to imagine new forms of life, language and connection.



Toyen und Štyrský um 1931. © Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář 2023

Notes for Editors

About TOYEN

Born Marie Čermínová in Prague in 1902, TOYEN was a founding member of the Czech Surrealist Group and later joined the Paris Surrealists in the postwar period. Adopting a gender-neutral pseudonym and eschewing traditional labels throughout her life, she developed a deeply personal and transgressive visual language. Her work spans painting, drawing, collage, and printmaking, often in collaboration with major literary figures. TOYEN's legacy has been the subject of growing international recognition, including the travelling retrospective *TOYEN: The Dreaming Rebel* (2021–22) and *TOYEN: Books Without Borders* (Gallery of Fine Arts, Ostrava, 2023).

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About Richard Saltoun Gallery

Founded in 2012, Richard Saltoun Gallery is committed to pioneering feminist, conceptual and socially engaged art. With locations in London, Rome and New York, the gallery represents a roster of artists whose practices challenge dominant art-historical narratives, with a focus on postwar and contemporary voices.

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