

**Newly Discovered Paintings by Roger Casement
Volume 1
Stephen Hall**

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Self portrait on the gallows at Pentonville, Roger Casement, 1916. 1.1 x 1.05 m. Oil on Canvas.
Stephen Hall 2015

One hundred years after his execution by hanging in London the global humanitarian activist and revolutionary Roger Casement (1864 - 1916) comes vividly back to life in a new exhibition of hitherto unseen paintings.

Until recently little was known about the thirty odd years spent at the outposts of empire before his rise to prominence on the world stage, execution for treason and long afterlife as a republican martyr, but new research suggests that he spent much of his time painting and drawing.

This is the first exhibition of an extensive archive of works now attributed to Casement which have come to light following the sale in 2010 of 'Sarita's Castle', the vast estate of Herbert Ward and Sarita Sanford Ward overlooking the Seine at Rolleboise 80 km outside of Paris. The paintings were discovered crated up behind a false wall in outbuildings of the extensive property when

developers moved in after it was acquired by a Chinese hotel group. Apparently undisturbed since the late 1910s many have survived in remarkable condition. Correspondence between Casement, Herbert Ward and Sarita Sanford reveals how Casement, without any permanent address of his own, had papers and canvases routinely shipped at first to the Wards' homes in England and Paris, and after 1908 directly to the sprawling Rolleboise Estate, where Herbert had established his studio and an extensive collection of African artefacts (eventually comprising over 7,000 items) now on display at the Smithsonian. Herbert Ward took up art soon after meeting Casement in Africa, and is best known for his realistic bronzes and illustrated adventure story's.¹

Following his estrangement from Ward in 1914² Casement continues to send canvases directly to Sarita Sanford. In his final letter of August 1st 1916 enclosed with his last self portrait, he begs her to burn the lot, luckily for us Sarita decides instead to brick them up into the walls of one of the enormous storehouses, destroying all other records of their existence.³

Roger Casement grew up in Antrim, orphaned early and brought up by relatives as a teenager he moved to Liverpool, and from 1883 to Africa where he worked on various rail and infrastructure projects and eventually as a British Consul based in Boma, now DRC. He became a prominent anti-colonial activist knighted in 1911 by King George for his reports exposing atrocities in the Belgian Congo and the virtual enslavement of indigenous rubber workers of the Putumayo in Peru. He was executed for treason at Pentonville for his role in the Easter Rising in Dublin of 1916, and is widely regarded as the author of the controversial Black Diaries.

The earliest known work, signed on the reverse Rod Casement and dated 1883, is of Kelp Harvesters in Antrim, and was probably painted in Liverpool, and the last 'Self portrait on the gallows at Pentonville' executed in August 1916, just days before his death.⁴ In the thirty five years between these terminal works, on canvases ranging from the intimate to the monumental Casement proves a unique and original observer of the imperial colonial project.

He also appears to have been familiar with the advanced art movements of his times, and many of its prime movers. Some of his later African works seem to preempt cubism, and incorporate collage-like effects. He strays briefly into symbolism at the turn of the century. Other subjects include informal scenes from colonial life, a portrait of Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski in Boma before he became Joseph Conrad, Arthur Rimbaud with coffee grinder in Harrar, Claude Monet repairing a bicycle, Jean Cocteau as a harlequin.⁵

Casement was an accomplished draughtsman and colourist, although in some cases his experimental use of unstable organic pigments has led to eerie effects of colour hue migration. There is also evidence that he used his own and other photographs as source material. Researchers anticipate that these discoveries will shed new light on Casements' many undocumented years, and his role in the explosion of interest in African art in the first decade of the 20th Century, while offering us a glimpse of an unseen world through the eyes of their mythic author.

Deftly weaving fact and fiction the artist becomes the ghostwriter of an autobiography in paint, while co-opting the popular art tropes of the secret lost masterwork, which may be a fake or a copy, and the idea of contemporary and modern art as a con.

With artistic creation increasingly popular for public figures and private individuals alike, and historical attribution in many cases at best provisional, the exhibition hangs on the intersection of these paradigms. The artist by creating retrospectively an oeuvre in early modern painting for Casement makes the performance of subjectivity the first of many conceptual folds animating the works.

Work List: (clockwise from entry)

1. Leopard Hunters of Boma, Roger Casement, 1888. 1.1 x 1.05 m. Oil on canvas
2. At Entre Rios, Roger Casement, 1910 - 11. 1.95 x 2.25 m. Oil on canvas
3. Ibo (now Igbo) Naming Mask, Roger Casement, 1896. 0.51 x 0.41 m. Oil on canvas
4. Senufo Maleeo, Roger Casement, 1902. 1.01 x 0.76 m. Oil on canvas
5. Gun Men, Para, Roger Casement, 1909. 1.52 x 1.01 m. Oil on canvas
6. Man Eating Caiman, Igaraparana, Roger Casement, 1910-11. 1.95 x 2.25 m. Oil on linen
7. Self portrait on the gallows at Pentonville, Roger Casement, 1916. 1.1 x 1.05 m. Oil on canvas
8. Launches at the meeting of the waters near Manaus, Roger Casement, 1911. 1.95 x 2.25 m. Oil on burlap.



Man Eating Caiman, Igaraparana, Roger Casement. 1910-11. 1.95 x 2.25 m.
Stephen Hall 2013 - 16

1. After Herbert Ward shows Casements works to artist friends at his Paris studio in 1903 he receives a sharp rebuke.
2. Casement controversially sought allies for Irelands' independence struggle in Germany at the outbreak of the first world war, which put him beyond the pale for many, including Herbert Ward, who turned the Robelloise Estate into a field hospital. In 1916 Casement was arrested attempting to land weapons shipped form Germany on the Irish coast after a leak to British intelligence.
3. Influential families like the Wards and Sanford's, who had the ear of kings and presidents, were able to get Casement materials and works in and out of Pentonville, free from the bureaucratic hoops through which others tumbled. Saritas' father Charles Henry Sanford (1840 - 1928) was a wealthy financier and railway tycoon, worth over 120 million dollars in the 1910s. Henry had letters of recommendation penned by Theodore Roosevelt, a family friend.
4. In some cases Casements' final intentions may always remain unclear: in his last major self-portrait Casement has red hair, although his own was famously black, scholars are divided as to whether this indicates underpainting where the black of the hair was intended to be added later, or whether it points to a tenancy to (perhaps sub-conscious) 'auto-iber-nicisation' the cultural phenomena exemplified in Douglas Hyde's' influential 1892 lecture on the 'necessity of de-anglicis-ing Ireland', and the subsequent Gaelicisation of many names.
5. Others works represent subcultures of the colonial outposts and in Europe, Casements' London Paintings & other encounters will be the subject of Volume 3 of the Catalogue Raisonne.