



The Street Entertainers Move On

Date

1935

Description

This watercolour was painted by 18-year-old Winnie Collins for a school competition in 1935. It is a rare depiction of a troupe of Drag entertainers who performed on the streets of Peckham. Female impersonation in theatre was common at this time, especially in the

'soldiers in skirts' that existed in theatrical units of the armed forces in World War One. During the 1920s and 30s some of these continued entertaining on stages across the UK and street entertainment drag was common in the working class areas of South and East London. The artist remembered how popular they were with the Peckham community: "As the children came running they arranged the little ones along the kerb stones and the bigger ones standing behind on the pavements. Then, all dressed as glamorous dancing girls they gave a high-kicking, loud-singing show interspersed with coarse jokes and gestures for the benefit of the mums standing at their front gates. They ended up by some acrobatic leaps and splits to the great delight of the audience!"