5 - **People's Palace**, Mile End Road, E1.

**Date:** 1936

**Architect:** William Campbell Jones & S A Smithers

**Sculptor:** Eric Gill

**Sculptures:** There are two series of sculptures -

A - Forming single panels above each of the two entrances:

1. Semi-naked male figure reclining on a cushion, playing pipes [D].

2. Semi-naked male figure reclining, arm outstretched, with book in hand [C].

B - Forming a frieze of five rectangular panels in between ground floor and first floor windows [B]:

1. Male figure between drawn curtains holding two masks - frowning and smiling [E].

2. Female figure seated, playing instrument [G].

3. Two male figures, one with a staff, shaking hands [H].

4. Partly-clothed dancing female figure [I].

5. Two boys in shorts boxing.

The building is in a heavy modernist style, of Portland stone with brick upper part - in Pevsner's disparaging words "mildly modern in design". The sculptures help considerably to articulate the building and give it a visual interest it would otherwise lack, and are themselves divided by the different spaces of the building's facade.

The sculptures are in low relief, carved from single blocks. This fact suggests that these were carved in Gill's studio, rather than in situ, as appears to have been his normal practice. The overt symbolism appears to represent some of the activities (drama, sport, the arts) which the People's Palace was set up to encourage amongst the local people.
Sources

Builder, Dec 18 1936.

Architects and Builders' News, Dec 25 1936.

Builder, July 17 1936.