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# FRIEZE MASTERS

*highlights*







**DUNCAN GRANT (1885-1978)**

*Dancers*, 1912

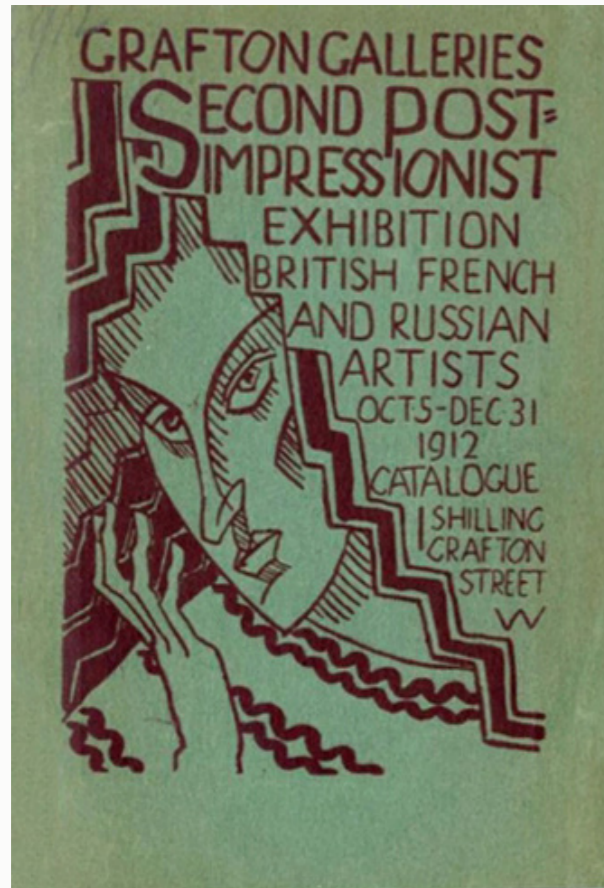
Oil on canvas

71.2 x 91.6 cm. (28 x 36 in.)

Duncan Grant's *Dancers* encapsulates a moment of radical transition in British art. Showcased at Roger Fry's seminal *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition*, it is one of Britain's first truly modernist works. In this depiction of five dancing figures, Grant fuses modernist movements such as cubism with his distinctive eye for pattern and design. Acquired directly from Fry's landmark exhibition, this work has, until recently, remained in the same family's collection since its execution in 1912.

The significance of this painting and its presence at the *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition* cannot be overstated. Fry's curatorial vision was to challenge British taste, which was still largely conservative and rooted in Victorian traditions, by presenting the radical innovations of European figures like Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso. The inclusion of Grant's work in this context positioned him at the forefront of the emerging British modernist movement. His ability to synthesise European avant-garde trends with a uniquely British sensibility helped pave the way for modernism in the UK.

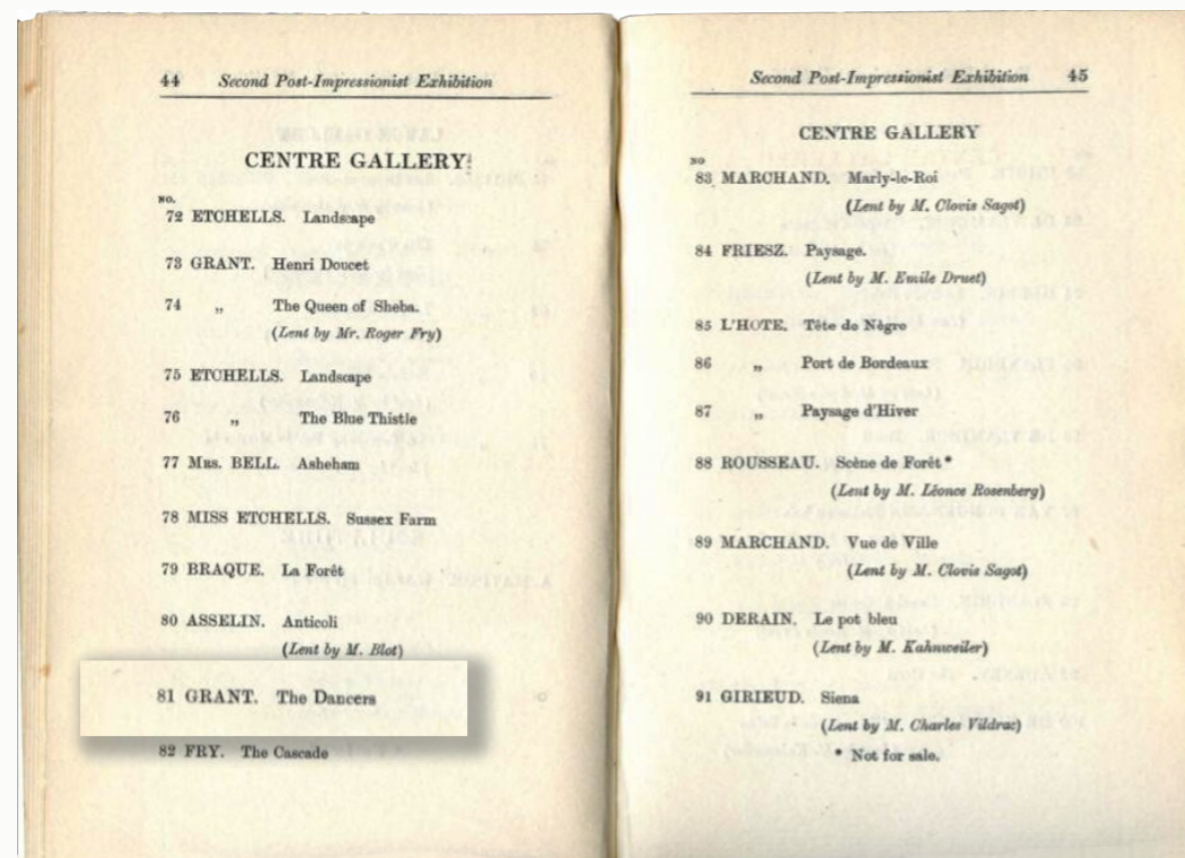




Exhibition catalogue of the *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition*, Grafton Galleries, London, 1912.



Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *Dance (I)*, 1909.  
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Three years prior to the execution of this work, in the summer of 1909 Grant was introduced to Matisse by Simon Bussy. Grant later recalled the masterpiece *Dance (I)* being sized in Matisse's studio and when asked whether he had been influenced by his work, he replied 'I have always been tremendously drawn to him [Matisse].'<sup>1</sup> The influence of Matisse's iconic *Dance (I)* on Duncan Grant's *Dancers* is palpable; the simplified, rhythmic composition, was a celebration of movement and form, and Grant clearly absorbed and adapted many of these innovations in his own painting.

The more fragmented, dynamic energy inherent in Grant's *Dancers* sets it apart from Matisse's fluid forms.

The present work pushes the boundaries of modern art, breaking down the figures into geometric forms and prioritising rhythmic, decorative elements over fidelity to human anatomy. Prior to this date, Britain had been somewhat peripheral to the cutting-edge developments in Paris – Grant's work places British artists at the epicentre of modern art.

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**DOD PROCTER (1890-1972)**

*Girl in a Red Cap*, 1914

Signed 'Dod Procter' (upper left),

and a landscape on the reverse

Oil on canvas

30 1/4 x 24 3/8 in. (77 x 62 cm)

This thoughtful depiction of a presently unknown young woman is Dod Procter's earliest known painted portrait. Procter became renowned for her evocative portraits of which this can be seen as a seminal example, expressing the boldness and promise that was to distinguish her career over the next half century. Although the sitter is presently unknown, the subject's self-assured, introspective characterisation is brilliantly contrasted by her startlingly red beret and vibrantly patterned backdrop. Procter's awareness of newly emerging artistic and societal sensibilities was to be a feature of many of her later works. Clearly valued and rated by the artist, this portrait remained in her studio for over thirty years until 1945, after

which it was widely exhibited across the United Kingdom.

Stylistically, the sculptural quality of the face, shoulders and upper right quadrant of the background are consistent with Procter's early practice. In contrast, the body is reminiscent of her later technique, painted with thin layers of paint in softer tones. It is likely therefore that the painting was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, and later reworked by Procter in the 1940s once her style had matured. In its completed form, between 1945 to 1961 the painting then toured a total of seven exhibitions, including the Royal Academy in 1956 - each listed in Procter's ledger.

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**ALFRED WOLMARK (1877-1961)**

Portrait of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, 1913

Signed with monogram and incorrectly dated '1912' lower right

Oil on canvas

46 ¾ x 33 in. (119 x 84 cm)

This striking portrait by Alfred Wolmark was completed in one long sitting. It is the first of two oil portraits of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska by his friend Wolmark, and the only one in private hands. It was given by the artist to Gaudier-Brzeska as a gift in return for a larger than life-size bust of Wolmark by Gaudier-Brzeska, depicted in the background of this work.

This portrait offers a complex examination of the relationship between artist and sitter. Wolmark presents Gaudier-Brzeska in the act of sculpting. He also incorporates a self-referential element through Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture of Wolmark in the background. In 1913, Gaudier-Brzeska sculpted Wolmark and

exhibited *Bust of Alfred Wolmark* with the Allied Artists Association Exhibition. The sculpture, modelled in clay and cast as a unique plaster, was larger than life-size and must have been executed just prior to the present work. It appears that Wolmark painted the present portrait in return for Gaudier-Brzeska's bust, including his friend's monumental sculpture within the painting. This portrait was exhibited later that year at the *International Society Exhibition*. This layered composition, which operates both as a portrait of Gaudier-Brzeska and an implicit self-portrait of Wolmark, represents both artists as interwoven, completed at a time when the two artists were very close.

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## BRITISH SCHOOL

*Portrait of a Boy Holding a Bow*, c.1780s

Oil on canvas

23 5/8 x 19 1/4 in. (60 x 49 cm)

This previously unpublished portrait of a young boy holding a bow has recently emerged from a private French collection and is a notable addition to a relatively small group of portraits depicting Black sitters from this period.

Although it shows remarkable liveliness and attention to character, it would be a mistake to overlook the context in which this portrait was produced. It is estimated that around 20,000 Black people lived in England in the late eighteenth century, and many were enslaved domestic

servants in wealthy households. The young man depicted here was likely one of these individuals, though his refined attire, which was most likely invented, is intended to indicate that he held a certain level of respect. He is portrayed in an elegant gold striped green silk coat, which is left casually unbuttoned, showing a white muslin shirt beneath. Gold is a colour associated with wealth and success, and the sitter's shimmering jacket is an unabashed statement of his owner's riches and fine taste.

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**CEDRIC MORRIS (1889-1982)**

*September Diagram*, Early 1940s

Oil on canvas

20 x 16 in. (50.5 x 40.5 cm)

Cedric Morris is regarded as one of the most talented and original flower painters of the early twentieth century. This animated still-life, notable for its distinctly modernist approach to colour and composition, was painted at Benton End during the Second World War and is an exceptional example of his work from this period of artistic experimentation.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, Morris generally depicted his floral subjects against a neutral backdrop, but during the wartime years, he explored and expanded his compositional designs by placing his still-lives within interior settings. The present work is an ambitious work from this period and the background is so angular that it appears almost abstract.

On close inspection, one can see how meticulously he planned these elements with each line drawn in pencil before the paint was applied. This is a clear departure from his style of painting in the 1930s which rarely involved any preparatory drawing whatsoever. A further distinguishing feature of this work is the title '*September Diagram*' which is remarkably conceptual, even within the context of his other still-life works from this experimental period. A diagram can be defined as a visual representation of an idea or object in graphical form, and in this instance, Morris has used a floral arrangement to symbolise the month of September, possibly in reference to the passing of summer into autumn.

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**MARY BEALE (1633-1699)**

*Bartholomew Beale (1656–1709)*, Early 1660s

Oil on paper, laid on canvas

14 1/2 x 11 in. (37 x 28 cm)

Mary Beale was one of Britain's first professional woman artists. She began her career by painting friends and family, before establishing a professional studio in her family home on Pall Mall. It was a collaborative enterprise: her husband, Charles, primed canvases, manufactured pigments, and kept meticulous business records, and her two children, Charles Jnr and Bartholomew, acted as painting assistants.

This characteristically sensitive head study of Beale's son Bartholomew was painted in the early 1660s. It is one of around twelve surviving studies of Bartholomew painted at this date and similar examples can be

found in public and private collections worldwide. Given the fragility of paper, many of her studies from this date have not survived; those that did have been laid onto panel or canvas, as seen here. The present work originally consisted of just the sitter's head and neck set against a dark background; the costume was added by another hand.

These works are notable for their immediacy and rank amongst the most affecting studies in oil in British art of the period. It is through detailed works like this that Beale taught herself how to paint to a professional level.

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**ROGER FRY (1866-1934)**

*Autumnal Landscape, South of France, 1920*

Signed and dated 'Roger Fry 1920' lower left

Oil on canvas

24 x 31 in. (61 x 78.7 cm)

Artist, critic and tastemaker Roger Fry is one of the most influential figures in British art history. He was a leading champion of modern art, coined the term Post-Impressionism, and introduced the British public to a new artistic frisson of European modernism. *Autumn Landscape, South of France* is a distinctly Bloomsbury homage to Paul Cézanne, the French giant of Post-Impressionism who Fry revered above all other modern artists. This period marked some of Fry's finest works, characterised by his exploration of the southern French landscape.

In October 1919, Fry visited Cézanne's hometown of Aix-en-Provence and his landscapes from this period reflect a clear nod to his work. Fry championed Cézanne and wrote extensively on his revolutionary approach to form and

colour in his landmark publication *Vision and Design*, published the same year as this painting. Fry's understanding of Cézanne's technique is evident in this work, which is meticulously built up through layers of colour to construct volume, depth and light. The two trees flanking the composition construct a visual frame through which to view the receding townscape and mountainous backdrop.

The French countryside was a powerful creative stimulus for Fry and remained an important source of inspiration until his death in 1934. He wrote to Vanessa Bell: 'It's too exciting to see this Southern colouring again ... Every bit of odd wall, every tiled roof seems as though it were exactly right, and only needed to be painted.'

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**SIR GODFREY KNELLER (1646-1723)**

*Portrait of Edward Richard Montagu, Viscount Hinchinbrooke (1692-1722) aged 8, 1700*

Signed with monogram and dated '1700' centre left

Oil on canvas

30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm)

Dressed in a dashing red jacket and blue cap, this portrait of Edward Richard Montagu, Viscount Hinchinbrooke exudes baroque panache. It was painted by the leading court artist Sir Godfrey Kneller and remained in the sitter's family for nearly two-hundred years, until it was sold at auction in 1981.

Unlike many of Kneller's works from this date, which were painted with the help of studio assistants, the present work, which is signed and dated, is wholly by his hand and is a revealing example of

his supreme talents as a portrait painter. The strong highlights on the sitter's jacket are painted with his characteristic flair and the complex folds of the linen shirt are brazenly reduced to a flurry of quick brushstrokes. The same brevity is observed in the headwear in which a series of rapid strokes laden with red and white paint perfectly balance the corresponding colouring in the sitter's lips and shirt. The face is painted with thick strokes and a very subtle blending of tones, which gives the head great animation – a visual effect no assistant could conjure.

[Find out more](#)