



VANESSA BELL (1879-1961)

Landscape in the South of France

1921

Oil on canvas

14 1/8 x 24 in. (36 x 61 cm)

Signed and dated 'VB 1921' lower right

Provenance

Private collection, UK;

Philip Mould & Company, London, acquired from the above.

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Vanessa Bell (née Stephen) was one of the central figures of the Bloomsbury group, a collective of artistic individuals who lived and worked together, embracing an unrestricted and bohemian lifestyle.

In October 1921, Bell travelled south with Duncan Grant, her children Julian, Quentin and Angelica, and members of their household. They settled at La Maison Blanche, a villa above Saint-Tropez belonging to Charles and Rose Vildrac, where they stayed until January 1922. A low rendered building with a red-tiled roof sits at the centre of the composition, partially enclosed by trees. Bell builds the scene from a restrained range of warm pinks, ochres and terracottas, set against muted olive greens and the clear blue of the sky. Areas of exposed ground are described in broad, economical strokes, giving the landscape the dry, sun-baked character that so struck Bell on her arrival in the south: '*It's delicious to be in the South – one forgets how nice it is – all the colours and light and space and everything looking so baked through.*'[1]

The setting is almost certainly Saint-Tropez in the South of France. Bell's correspondence from the closing months of 1921 repeatedly places her at La Maison Blanche, while contemporary accounts establish that she and Grant remained there throughout the winter.[2] A glint of intense blue visible at the far left of the composition may indicate the sparkling waters of the Golfe de Saint-Tropez. The enclosed character of the scene, with its modest building set among trees, may suggest the immediate surroundings of La Maison Blanche or the semi-rural landscape above the town.

A useful comparison is by Bell's *Interior with a Table*, 1921, now in the collection at Tate. Painted at La Maison Blanche, the view opens through French windows onto the landscape beyond, its ochre earth, terracotta architecture and subdued greens closely corresponding to the palette of the present picture. The house itself stood above and behind Saint-Tropez, with views towards the port and coastline.



Vanessa Bell, *Landscape in the South of France*, 1921.
Private collection. Previously with Philip Mould & Company.



Duncan Grant, *South France, Notre-Dame*, c. 1921-22.
Private collection. Previously with Philip Mould & Company.



Duncan Grant (1885-1978), *South of France*, 1922.
Tate, London.

The months spent at La Maison Blanche were also significant for Bell's development as an independent painter. Bell and Grant, whose work had become increasingly intertwined, resolved while at Saint-Tropez to work separately.[3]

[1] Vanessa Bell, (1921) quoted in 'Vanessa Bell Interior with a Table 1921', Tate. [online]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bell-interior-with-a-table-n05078> (Accessed: 18/08/2026).

[2] Tate Archive, Charleston Trust papers, TGA 8010/2, Letters to Clive Bell, including TGA 8010/2/156-161, October-December 1921.

[3] Frances Spalding, (2018) *Vanessa Bell: Portraits of the Bloomsbury Artist*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 193.

