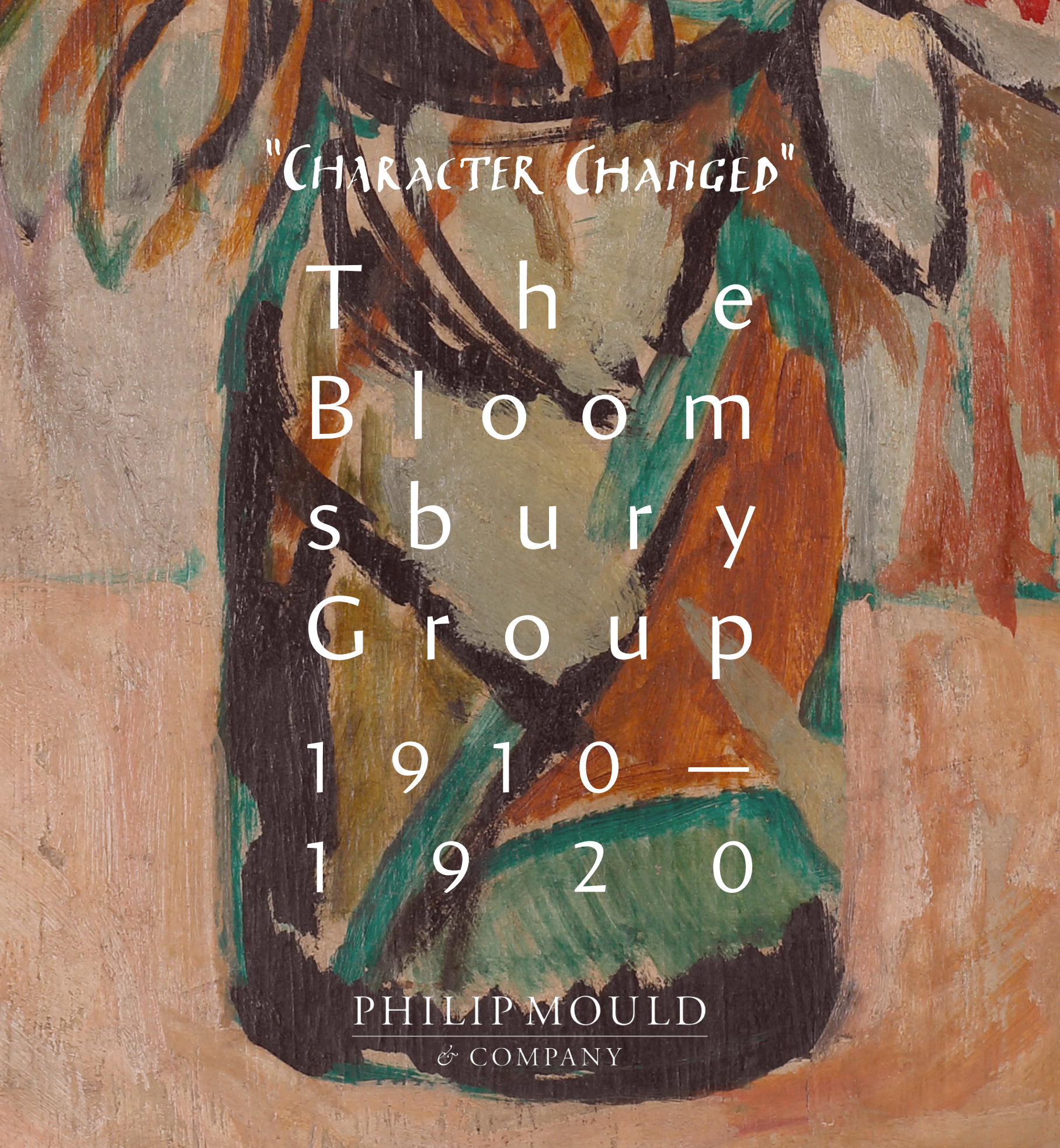


"Character Changed"

The Bloomsbury Group

1910—1920

PHILIP MOULD
& COMPANY

Exhibition catalogue produced on the occasion of the exhibition
"Character Changed": The Bloomsbury Group, 1910-1920

PHILIP MOULD
& COMPANY

10 November – 9 December 2026

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"Character Changed"

The Bloomsbury Group 1910—1920

Catalogue for the exhibition, written in collaboration with Richard Shone

PHILIP MOULD
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Contents

6 Introduction

Catalogue entries

Cat.1 **Duncan Grant**
Seated Male Nude, 1909

Cat.2 **Vanessa Bell**
Croquet, c. 1909-10

Cat.3 **Vanessa Bell**
Still-life of Dahlias, Chrysanthemums and Begonias, 1912

Cat.4 **Duncan Grant**
Rorkhee Chair and Hat (Asheham House), 1913

Cat.5 **Duncan Grant**
Table Vase – Design for 'Macbeth', 1912-3

Cat.6 **Duncan Grant**
Gerald Shove at a Summer Camp, c. 1913

Cat.7 **Duncan Grant**
An Atlantid, c. 1914-15

Cat.8 **Duncan Grant**
The Coffee Table, Asheham, 1914

Cat.9 **Duncan Grant**
Still Life with Fruit and Coffee-pot, 1914

Cat.10 **Vanessa Bell**
Portrait of Duncan Grant, 1915

Cat.11 **Duncan Grant**
Portrait of Mary Hutchinson, 1915–17

Cat.12 **Roger Fry**
Poinsettias, c. 1915

Cat.13 **Duncan Grant**
Portrait of Vanessa Bell (The Red Hat), c. 1917–18

Cat.14 **Duncan Grant**
Still Life in the Garden Room at Charleston, c. 1917–19

Cat.15 **Roger Fry**
St. Francis of Assisi, c. 1917

Cat.16 **Duncan Grant**
Winter through Window (46 Gordon Square), 1920

Introduction

“On or about December 1910 human character changed.”
— Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf’s celebrated declaration captures a moment of profound cultural and artistic transformation in Britain. The decade that followed witnessed an extraordinary period of experimentation, in which established conventions of representation were challenged and a new visual language began to emerge. At the forefront of this revolution were the Bloomsbury Group painters Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

In 1910, Roger Fry curated the exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* at London’s Grafton Galleries which gave British audiences their first major encounter with the revolutionary work of Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse and their contemporaries. The exhibition was divisive for its unabashed celebration of modernism but proved a revelation for a younger generation of artists, opening up entirely new possibilities for British painting.

Over the following decade, Fry, Bell and Grant established themselves at the forefront of the British avant-garde. Their work moved beyond naturalistic representation towards bold simplification, expressive colour and, at times, near-abstraction. Through their shared artistic theories and the establishment of the Omega Workshops in 1913, they sought to dissolve the boundaries between fine and decorative art, bringing daring modernist principles into everyday life.

Bringing together paintings made between 1910 and 1920, *“Character Changed”* explores this remarkable period of artistic innovation. The works on display – including portraiture, still life and design – are drawn predominantly from private collections, several not seen in public for decades.



1

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

Seated Male Nude
1909

Oil on panel

31 1/8 x 21 in. (78.8 x 53.2 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist, from whom purchased by;
Edward le Bas;
His Estate sale; Christie's, London, 3 March 1978, lot 145;
Eardley Knollys, thence by descent to;
Mattei Radev, thence by descent;
Bonhams, 30 June 2021, lot 12;
Philip Mould & Company, acquired from the above;
Private collection, UK, acquired from the above.

Exhibitions
Tate Gallery, London, *Duncan Grant: A Retrospective Exhibition,* organised by Arts Council of Great Britain, 12 May-20 June 1959, cat. no. 14;
Royal Academy, London, *A Painter's Collection: An Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture from the Collection of Edward Le Bas*, 1963, cat. no. 155.

This double-sided early work by Duncan Grant was painted at an important transitional moment. Although academic in conception – a nude model is a well-established, conventional theme – the seated male figure on the obverse is captured in emphatic, colourful tones, foreshadowing the striking works from the following decade.

An appointment diary Grant kept during 1908-1909 mentions a paid male model who posed in his studio at 19 Belgrave Road, Pimlico, late in 1908 and again from November 1909 at 21 Fitzroy Square. It seems likely that the standing nude on the reverse was painted first in 1908, with the more dynamic seated nude undertaken the following year.

During this period, Grant painted a number of portraits which have come to symbolise his early efforts at formalised figure painting. One such work, a portrait of Lytton Strachey,[1] painted slightly earlier than the present example, shows a similarly assured approach in areas, but with less daring use of colour. Away from a formal setting, and painting solely for study and self-



improvement in private, we see here a less cautious artist who uses tones of greens and mauves to describe flesh and long, sweeping lines to draw contours.

Recently returned from Paris, where he had studied at Jacques-Emile Blanche's school, La Palette, Grant's work at this date was well-formed and, at times, imaginative, but it was only later, after Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition in 1910, that he began to truly push against the boundaries of British art. LH & RS

[1] Duncan Grant, *Lytton Strachey*, c.1909, Tate.



Duncan Grant, *Seated Male Nude*, reverse.

2

Vanessa Bell (1879-1961)

Croquet
c.1909-10

Oil on canvas board

10 x 14 in. (25 x 35 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Angelica Garnett;
Anthony d'Offay, London, by 1972
Private collection, acquired from the above;
By family descent.

This rare and previously unrecorded early work by Vanessa Bell can be dated to around 1909-10 and has never been exhibited. The scene is a game of croquet, a quintessential Edwardian pastime, and is a pertinent visual anchor point for this exhibition, showing the style and type of work painted by Bell prior to her absorption of French contemporary art in the following decade.

Bell's work from this period is seldom encountered, mainly due to the destruction of her studio during the Blitz which contained many of her early paintings. Those that have survived include a portrait of her father Leslie Stephen,[1] and a depiction of Saxon Sidney-Turner at a piano.[2] Her best-known surviving work from this period is *Iceland Poppies* [fig. 1], which was exhibited at the New English Art Club in 1909 and received a positive response.

Like *Iceland Poppies*, the colouring of the present work is more muted and reveals the heavy influence of her contemporaries and past tutors. Bell's early training began in 1896 when she studied drawing at Arthur Cope's School of Art



in Kensington, later progressing to the Royal Academy Schools where she studied under artists such as John Singer Sargent. Although aware of the developments in European painting, it wasn't until Bell became close friends with Roger Fry in 1910 that she began to reassess her own artistic practice. The impact was not immediate, but over a short period of time her style began to shift away from that seen here, towards a brighter palette and a simplification of form, culminating in works such as *Still-life of Dahlias, Chrysanthemums and Begonias* [cat. 3]. LH & RS

[1] Vanessa Bell, *Leslie Stephen*, c. 1902-3, Private collection.
[2] Vanessa Bell, *Saxon Sidney-Turner*, c.1908, The Charleston Trust.



Fig 1 | Vanessa Bell, *Iceland Poppies,* c. 1908-9.
Oil on canvas, 21 x 17 ¼ in. (53 x 44 cm). The Charleston Trust.

3

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

Still-life of Dahlias, Chrysanthemums and Begonias
1912

Signed 'V Bell' upper right

Oil on board laid on panel

28 3/4 x 20 3/8 in. (73 x 51.7 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Angelica Garnett, 1961;
with Anthony d'Offay, London, by 1971;
Purchased by the previous owner at the 2006 exhibition;
Christie's, London, 2 March 2021, lot 140;
Private collection, UK.

Exhibitions
Plymouth, Arts Council of Great Britain, *Vanessa Bell: A Memorial Exhibition*, April - May 1964, no. 22: this exhibition travelled to Bolton, Museum and Art Gallery, May 1964; Leeds, City Art Gallery, June 1964; Norwich, Castle Museum and Art Gallery, July 1964; and Brighton, Art Gallery, August 1964;
Rye, Rye Art Gallery, *Artists of Bloomsbury: Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours*, June - August 1967, no. 23;
Houston, Meredith Long & Company, *Still Life*, 2006.
Philip Mould & Company, *Charleston: The Bloomsbury Muse,* 14 September – 10 November 2021, no. 1.

Literature
Exhibition catalogue, *Artists of Bloomsbury: Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours*, Rye Art Gallery, Rye, 20 June - 28 August 1967 [exhibition catalogue] Rye: Rye Art Gallery, no. 23 (illus.).
Lawrence Hendra, and Ellie Smith, (2021) *Charleston: The Bloomsbury Muse.* London: Paul Holberton, no. 1.

This work is one of the earliest extant examples from Vanessa Bell's early modernist phase; other examples having been destroyed during the Blitz. Unlike some of her contemporaries, Bell's work was not immediately transformed by her exposure to Roger Fry's First Post-Impressionist Exhibition; instead, she carefully assimilated these new influences, experimenting with strong colour and simplified compositions. This is made clear by comparison between *Studland Beach* [fig. 2], a bold interpretation of an everyday scene that contrasts sharply with *Croquet* [cat.1], painted earlier that year.

By late summer 1912, Bell had been invited to exhibit in the Second Post Impressionist Exhibition, resulting in an intense period of artistic activity. It was during this period, in September and October, that the present work was painted. Bell was staying with Virginia and Leonard Woolf at Asheham House in the South Downs, where two of the four works she later exhibited were painted. During the latter half of their stay, the weather worsened, and Vanessa







Fig. 2 | Vanessa Bell, *Studland Beach*, 1911,
Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm), Tate.

and Duncan remained indoors painting still-lifes and interior scenes. One of the works was *Nosegay* [fig.3], which shows a similar composition to the present work and likely preceded it. In both works, the flowers are reduced to simpler, near-geometric forms, with a brightening of colour that grew in intensity the following year. LH & RS



Fig. 3 | Vanessa Bell, *Nosegay*, 1912, medium and size unknown, whereabouts unknown.

4

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

Rorkhee Chair and Hat (Asheham House)
1913

Oil on canvas

30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm)

Signed and dated 'D Grant / 1913' upper right

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Anthony d'Offay, London;
Private collection, acquired from the above 1973, and thence by descent.

Exhibitions
Fine Art Society, London, 'Bloomsbury Portraits, an exhibition marking the publication of the book of the same title, by Richard Shone'. 1976 (no catalogue).

Painted in 1913, *Rorkhee Chair and Hat (Asheham House)* depicts a folding canvas chair, with a hat balancing on the backrest. The painting is an unusually direct demonstration of Grant's interest in the painterly possibilities of everyday domestic objects. Richard Shone notes the work's "*unpredictable, even whimsical" qualities, observing that "we find him delving into all the intricacies of his subject, especially the structure of the chair in relation to the softer contours of the hat*."

As the earliest of Grant's still lifes in the exhibition, this work marks an important stage in his experiments with pictorial space. It offers an imaginative deconstruction of perspective, in which the conventional spatial relationships between the folding chair, hat and surrounding interior are intentionally disrupted.

Folding canvas chairs of this kind appear in photographs of Asheham House and several paintings executed there in 1913–14 [fig. 4]. Their exposed wooden frames and suspended fabric seats presented a particularly interesting arrangement of intersecting lines and textures which Grant explores here with unabashed





Fig. 4 | Roger Fry, Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell painting Lytton Strachey, at Asheham, 1913.

freedom. The chair's frame is articulated through strong diagonals and the hat, loosely folded on the seat, becomes the focal point of the composition. The surrounding interior is similarly fragmented – the chair legs and adjacent objects appear to occupy conflicting planes – and Grant appears to construct the composition as a series of interlocking forms whose relationships are established through colour and line, rather than traditional perspective.

The identification of the subject is supported by Vanessa Bell's 1951 inventory of paintings at Charleston, in which she recorded an unstretched canvas by Grant entitled *Rorkhee Chair and Hat (Asheham House)*. This reference documents the painting's presence at Charleston nearly four decades after it was painted, and the title by which Bell knew it. ES & RS

5

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

Table Vase – Design for 'Macbeth'
c.1912-13

Gouache on paper

20 x 15 in. (50.8 x 38.1 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The Artist's estate;
Anthony d'Offay, U.K., acquired from the above 1997;
Private collection, U.K., acquired from the above;
Philip Mould & Company, London, acquired from the above.

Exhibitions
Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, *Duncan Grant: Designer,* 1–29 February 1980, no. 93;
The Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, *The Omega Workshops: Alliance and Enmity in English Art, 1911–1920*, January 18 – March 6, 1984;
The Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 1986;
Spink & Son, London *Duncan Grant & Vanessa Bell: Design and Decoration, 1910–1960*, 23 October – 22 November 1991, no. 7;
Michael Parkin Gallery, London, *The Friday Club*, 1996 [no. 31].

Literature
Spink & Son, (1991) *Duncan Grant & Vanessa Bell: Design and Decoration, 1910–1960*. no. 7.
Richard Shone (1999), *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant*. London: Tate Gallery Publishing, p. 177, no. 100;
Marjorie Garber (2023), *Shakespeare in Bloomsbury*. Yale University Press, p.283.

Duncan Grant's *Table Vase – Design for 'Macbeth'* is an unusual survival from an ambitious theatrical commission. Conceived as a painted stage ornament, this design offers an early example of Grant's attempts to extend the formal innovations of Post-Impressionism beyond the canvas.

In 1912, Grant was engaged by the theatre director and dramatist Harley Granville-Barker to design costumes and scenery for a proposed production of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Granville-Barker was then at the forefront of theatrical reform in Britain, seeking to challenge the elaborate naturalism of Victorian Shakespeare productions in favour of a more imaginative approach to staging. His decision to employ Grant, who had little professional status in the theatre world, but was already recognised as one of Britain's most experimental young painters, reflected this ambition.[1]

Granville-Barker first approached Grant in April 1912, intending to stage Macbeth at the Savoy Theatre that autumn. Financial difficulties led to the production's postponement, but plans were revived the following spring. Grant devoted considerable attention to the commission, producing designs for costumes, scenery and stage furnishings, many of which reveal his interest in





Byzantine art and the decorative possibilities of colour and pattern.

This daring gouache was conceived as an ornament for the banquet scene in Act III, Scene IV, in which Macbeth is confronted by the ghost of Banquo. The design was intended to be realised as a large, flat, painted cut-out, one of several ornaments arranged along the banquet table. Against a dark background, Grant depicts a monumental vessel in shades of terracotta and red, its narrow base expanding into a broad, angular body surmounted by a shallow neck. Its exaggerated proportions and bold colour would have ensured its visibility from front to back row seats.[2]

The designs for *Macbeth* coincided with Grant's involvement in the establishment of the Omega Workshops, founded with Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell in 1913. The Workshops sought to dissolve conventional distinctions between fine and decorative art by applying the formal innovations of Post-Impressionist painting to furniture, ceramics, textiles and other everyday domestic objects. As Marjorie Garber has observed, the angular vessels conceived for Macbeth anticipate certain forms subsequently explored in his pottery designs for the Omega Workshops.[3]



Fig. 5 | Duncan Grant, Untitled (design for a prop for a production of "Macbeth"), c.1912.
The Charleston Trust.

Despite Granville-Barker's enthusiasm, the collaboration proved difficult. Grant struggled to reconcile his artistic ideas with the practical demands of a large theatrical production. In June 1913 he withdrew from the project, leaving Granville-Barker free to use the drawings already completed. A second gouache for the banquet scene is in the collection at Charleston. ES & RS

[1] Marjorie Garber (2023), *Shakespeare in Bloomsbury*. Yale University Press, p.283.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

6

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

Gerald Shove at a Summer Camp
1913

Oil on canvas

29 7/8 x 24 in. (76 x 61 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
Michael Parkin Fine Art, London;
Peter Garner, purchased from the above, 26th July 1973;
Chenil Gallery, London;
Private collection, acquired from the above;
Sotheby's, London, 13 June 2006, lot 10;
Private collection.

Literature
Richard Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant,* Tate Gallery Publishing, London, 1999, p.95.
Andrea Rygg Karberg, *Bloomsbury-gruppen: Kunsten at leve,* Nivgaards Malerisamling, Niva, Denmark, 2025, p.49.

The summer of 1913 was a productive and artistically formative period for Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, who had recently joined Roger Fry as co-directors of the Omega Workshop. In August that year, Grant and Bell joined a twelve-day camping holiday at Brandon, near Thetford, on the Norfolk–Suffolk border. The camp offered an informal setting for artistic experimentation at a moment when British modernism was undergoing profound change..

The artists worked outdoors, responding to their surroundings through increasingly simplified forms and expressive colour. An impressive group of works resulted from the trip, including Grant's *Tents*,[1] in which the campsite is transformed into a rhythmic arrangement of geometric forms, and Bell's *Seated Figure* [fig. 5] (previously with Philip Mould & Company), now recognised as a defining work of her early career. Their shared preoccupation with the relationship between colour and pictorial structure reflects their engagement with French painting, particularly the work of Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso.

The figure depicted casually lying on his front, absorbed in reading, is Gerald Shove, an economist and an intimate associate of the Bloomsbury circle [fig. 6]. From 1912 he shared lodgings at 38 Brunswick Square with Grant, Virginia and



Adrian Stephen, and had already been painted by Grant in an earlier portrait, subsequently bequeathed by Keynes to King's College. During the First World War, he undertook agricultural work as a conscientious objector at Garsington Manor, the Oxfordshire home of Lady Ottoline Morrell, where he was responsible for tending the poultry. Morrell's house provided another important meeting place for the artists and writers associated with Bloomsbury, extending the circle's social and cultural networks beyond London.

Although dated by Grant '1911', the painting is now securely associated with the Brandon camp of 1913. Such discrepancies are not unusual in Grant's oeuvre, as he frequently signed and dated paintings retrospectively, sometimes inaccurately. ES & RS

[1] Duncan Grant, *Tents*, 1913, private collection.



Fig. 6 | Vanessa Bell, *Seated Figure*, 1913.
Art Gallery of South Australia.



Fig. 7 | Lady Ottoline Morrell, Gerald Frank Shove, 1917. Vintage snapshot print © National Portrait Gallery

7

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

An Atlantid
c.1914-15

Oil and collage on canvas

55 x 24 3/4 in. (140 x 63 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
The Bloomsbury Workshop, London;
Private collection, UK.

Literature
Tony Bradshaw et al., *Grupa Bloomsbury: British Bohemia*, International Cultural Centre, Krakow, Poland, 2010, p.84.

This monumental, modernist work was made in around 1914 and reflects the interest during this period to look beyond European artistic traditions in search of new approaches to depicting the human form.

The stylised, mask-like face and towering physique are reminiscent of African sculpture and echo the work of Modigliani, whose work Grant was certainly familiar with. Both artists participated in an exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1914 and Grant also owned one of Modigliani's drawings.[1] Caryatids were a recurring motif in Modigliani's work at this date with one such example having been gifted to friend and fellow artist Jacob Epstein [fig. 8].

A companion piece by Grant, *A Caryatid*, is in Manchester City Art Gallery, and is likewise made using oil paint and collage. Although Grant started experimenting with collage in the early 1910s, it was following a visit to the studios of Picasso and Matisse with Bell in 1914 that he further explored its versatility [see cat. 9]. In the present work, a collage of painted paper forms animates the surface and supresses its depth, giving the impression that the figure is suspended within the space. Affixed to the surface are pieces of the same red paisley textile that Bell can be seen wearing in at least three portraits by Grant.[2]



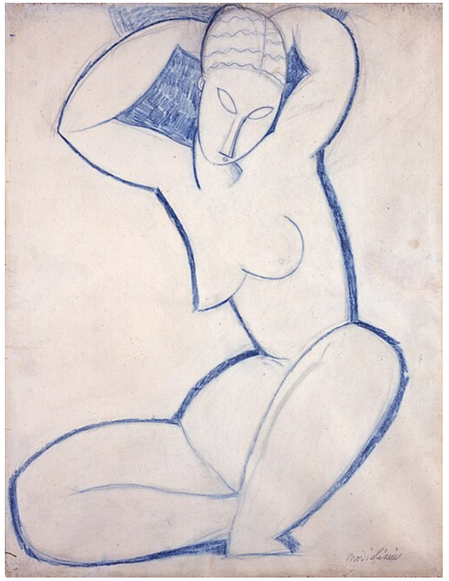


Fig. 8 | Amadeo Modigliani, Caryatid, c. 1913-14, Pencil and blue crayon on paper, 55 x 41.5 cm. The New Art Gallery, Walsall.

The purpose of the present work and its companion Caryatid is not known, although their scale and complexity suggests they were carefully considered. They are unique within Grant's oeuvre at this date and reflect both his versatility as an artist and his absorption of contemporary artistic influences. LH

[1] Whitechapel Art Gallery, *Twentieth-Century Art: A Review of Modern Movements*, 8 May – 20 June 1914.
[2] National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 4331); The Charleston Trust, Lewes; Private Collection, UK (previously with Offer Waterman).



Fig. 9 | Duncan Grant, *Caryatid*, c.1912
© Estate of Duncan Grant, Manchester Art Gallery.

8

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

The Coffee Table, Asheham
1914

Oil on board

19 1/8 x 26 5/8 in. (48.7 x 67.6 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Richard Shone, UK, gifted from the above 1970;
Piano Nobile, London;
Private collection, U.K., acquired from the above.

Literature
Richard Shone (1993), *Bloomsbury Portraits.* London: Phaidon, p.126, pl. 97.

"I can well remember Duncan Grant sometimes picking up a familiar object in his studio – a match box, a vase, a book – and looking at it as though he had never seen such a thing before. He de-materialised the object and saw it only in formal, aesthetic terms." – Richard Shone

Painted during the summer of 1914, *The Coffee Table, Asheham* belongs to a group of still lifes in which Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell explored the same arrangement of everyday objects through their increasingly post-impressionistic style. It was painted at Asheham House, a secluded Regency property in the Sussex Downs which was rented by Bell's sister, Virginia Woolf, and her husband Leonard. Bell and Grant stayed at the house in 1914, painting alongside one another and responding to the same subjects. Among their visitors that year were Roger Fry and Lytton Strachey, whose presence made Asheham an important centre of Bloomsbury's artistic and intellectual life [fig. 4].

During this Post-Impressionist period, the influence of Cubism is particularly evident in Grant's repeated treatment of this still-life arrangement. Although the objects themselves are commonplace, their shifting perspectives and the interplay of flattened forms reflect his growing familiarity with the work of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Grant returned to this arrangement in several versions, including one incorporating collage, an experimental technique associated with the recent innovations of Picasso





Fig. 10 | Duncan Grant, *A Still Life, Asheham House,* 1914.
The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds.

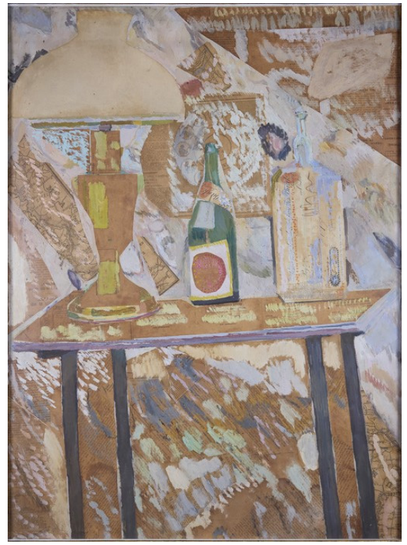


Fig. 11 | Vanessa Bell, *Still Life (Triple Alliance),* 1914.
The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds.

and Braque. A related composition, *A Still Life, Asheham House* [fig. 10], is now held by the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery at the University of Leeds, alongside Bell's *Triple Alliance* [fig. 11], which depicts a strikingly similar arrangement, reflecting their practice of painting alongside one another.

The present painting remained in Grant's possession until 1970, when it was gifted directly from him by the art historian Richard Shone, whose subsequent scholarship has played an important role in establishing the significance of Bloomsbury's contribution to British modernism.
ES & RS

9

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

Still Life with Fruit and Coffee Pot
1914

Signed and dated '1914 D. Grant.' (lower right)

Pencil, oil and collage on panel

18 3/4 x 25 1/4 in. (47.6 x 64.2 cm.)

Private Collection

Provenance
Lord and Lady Rennell of Rodd;
Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 1985;
Christie's, London, 13 December 2012, lot 224;
Private collection, UK;
Christie's, 23 November 2017, lot 262;
Piano Nobile, London, acquired from the above;
Private collection, UK, acquired from the above.

Literature
Richard Shone, (1993) *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and their circle*. London: Phaidon, pl. 99.

Exhibited
Possibly, Doré Gallery, London, 'Vorticist exhibition', June 1915;
Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 'The Omega Workshops Alliance and Enmity in English Art 1911-1920', January - March 1984, no. 61.

Free from any complex human emotion or ideas, this brilliantly coloured still life of everyday objects ranks among the most accomplished of Grants work in this genre at this date.

Grant started using collage in his easel paintings in 1914. By incorporating cut pieces of paper onto the painting surface, Grant was able to alter the perspective and give the subject a greater physicality through emphasising shapes and contours. Grant was inspired by the collage work of Picasso and later acknowledged how copying a Picasso collage in Fry's collection influenced his best-known work in this medium, *Interior at Gordon Square*.[1] He was also introduced to collage at the Omega Workshops, where pieces of card were often used to plan designs for textiles and other interior objects.

The present work was painted either in his rooms at 38 Brunswick Square or at Clive and Vanessa Bell's house at 46 Gordon Square, where Grant created several collage works in 1914-15. The relaxed grouping of objects – a lustre coffee pot,





a beer bottle and what appears to be a sandwich at the right, was typical of both Grant and Bell, who were often casual in their choice of still life items at this date. Focussing on the purely visual, still lifes like this example showcase the endless possibilities this genre offered to experiment and explore new and exciting ideas. LH & RS

[1] Duncan Grant, Interior at Gordon Square, c.1914-15, Tate.
Frances Spalding (1998) *Duncan Grant: A Biography*. London: Pimlico, p. 172.

10

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

Portrait of Duncan Grant
1915

Oil on canvas

29 1/2 x 19 3/4 in. (75 x 50 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Anthony d'Offay, London;
Private collection, acquired from the above 1973, and thence by descent.

Literature
Simon Watney, (1980) *English Post Impressionism*. London: Cassell Ltd, (illus. between pp. 48 and 49).

Painted during a period of increasing artistic and personal intimacy between Bell and Grant, this portrait offers a particularly direct expression of their close bond. The two artists painted one another repeatedly throughout their careers, but their early portraits are among their most unconventional and experimental. In this rarely seen, unfinished work, Grant's features are constructed through boldly applied strokes of paint, exemplifying Bell's extraordinary command of colour.

The present work was probably begun in the spring of 1915 at Eleanor House, West Wittering, a house belonging to their friends Mary and St John Hutchinson. Bell and Grant spent several weeks there, painting alongside one another, occasionally joined by other members of the Bloomsbury circle. The house and its surroundings provided the setting for several works, including Grant's *Vanessa Bell Painting*,[1] which depicts Bell working at her easel in a nearby boathouse studio. These portraits of one another reveal the increasingly close relationship between their artistic practices as well as their developing romantic partnership. The date is also particularly poignant as 1915 was the final year before the introduction of conscription and the artists' move to Charleston in 1916, when war would significantly alter their lives.

Unfinished paintings offer a fascinating insight into any artist's working method, and this portrait is no exception. Here, Grant is depicted seated, wearing a shirt and patterned tie with braces, yet





Fig. 12 | Vanessa Bell, *Self-Portrait,* c.1915. Yale Center for British Art



Vanessa Bell, *Portrait of Duncan Grant*, 1915.

large areas of his torso remain exposed. He is set against an interior articulated through a small number of vertical and horizontal lines with a framed picture partially visible at the upper right. Bell has made little attempt to conceal the individual strokes of her brush and, as a result, the portrait retains a remarkable immediacy – its economy of handling is indicative of Bell's increasing confidence in the expressive possibilities of paint.

A particularly close comparison can be made with Bell's *Self-Portrait* [fig. 12] in the collection of the Yale Centre for British Art, and currently on display at Tate Britain. Both paintings adopt a closely framed composition, with the sitter's features constructed through broad passages of boldly applied colour set against a colourful interior. Their similarities in palette, handling and composition suggest that they may have been painted around the same date, possibly around the time of Bell and Grant's stay at Eleanor House in the spring of 1915.

A number of Bell's paintings from this period remained unfinished, and several were subsequently found among piles of unstretched paintings in an attic room next to her studio at Charleston. She lists, for example, her fauvist portrait of Lytton Strachey as 'unfinished' in her 1951 inventory of works at Charleston. The present painting, precisely because of its unfinished state, provides a valuable record of her early experiments from this radical period.
ES & RS

[1] Duncan Grant, *Vanessa Bell Painting*, 1915, National Galleries of Scotland.
[2] Vanessa Bell, *Lytton Strachey*, 1913, private collection.

11

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

Portrait of Mary Hutchinson
1915–17

Oil on board

23 5/8 x 17 5/8 in. (61.4 x 44.8 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The Artist
Gallery Edward Harvane, London;
Lady Rumbold (née Pauline Tennant), 1973;
Private Collection, UK, 2008;
Private collection, 2017;
Piano Nobile, London, 2018;
Kit Kemp MBE, acquired from the above.

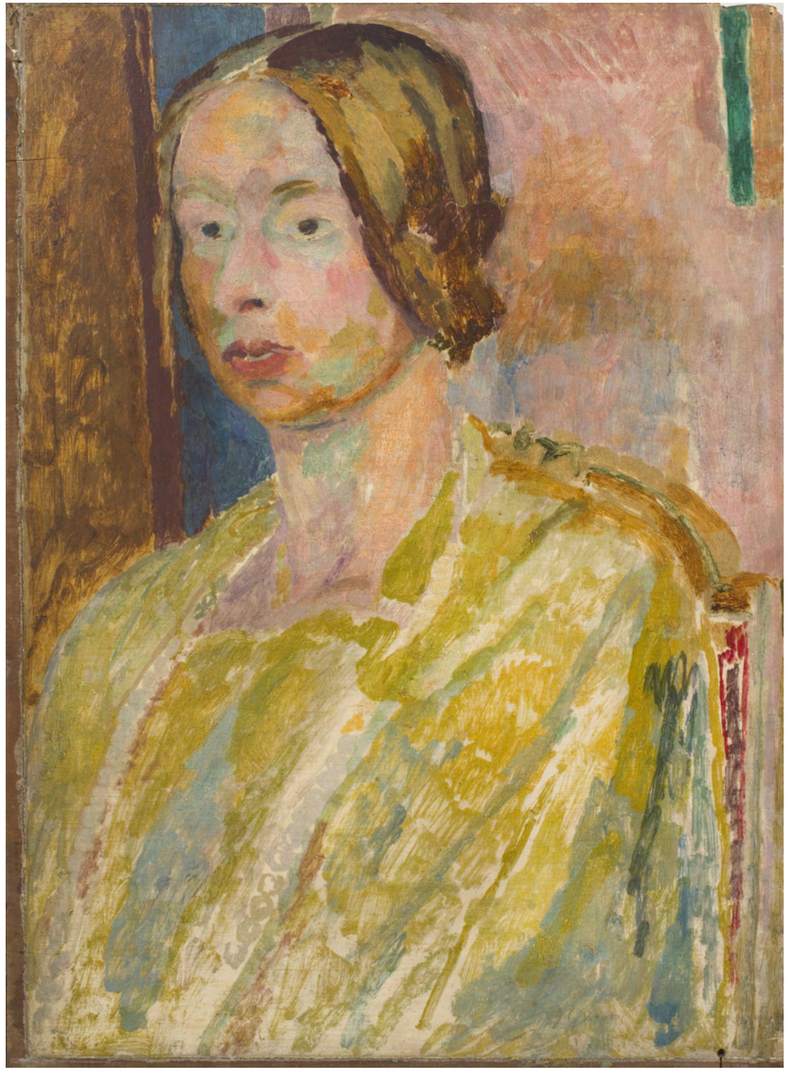
Exhibitions
Cambridge, Arts Council Gallery, P*ortraits by Duncan Grant,* 8-29 Nov. 1969, no. 23, touring to Newcastle, Laing Art Gallery, 6 Dec. 1969 – 4 Jan. 1970; University of Hull, 10 Jan.-1 Feb. 1970
London, Gallery Edward Harvane, *Ottoline: An Exhibition of Works by Those Artists who Gathered about the Personality of Lady Ottoline Morrell*, 27 Oct. – 27 Nov. 1971, no. 40 (illus.)
London, Piano Nobile, F*rom Omega to Charleston: The Art of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, 1910–1934,* no. 13 (col. illus.)
London, Philip Mould & Company, *Charleston: The Bloomsbury Muse,* 14 September-12 November 2021, no. 2.

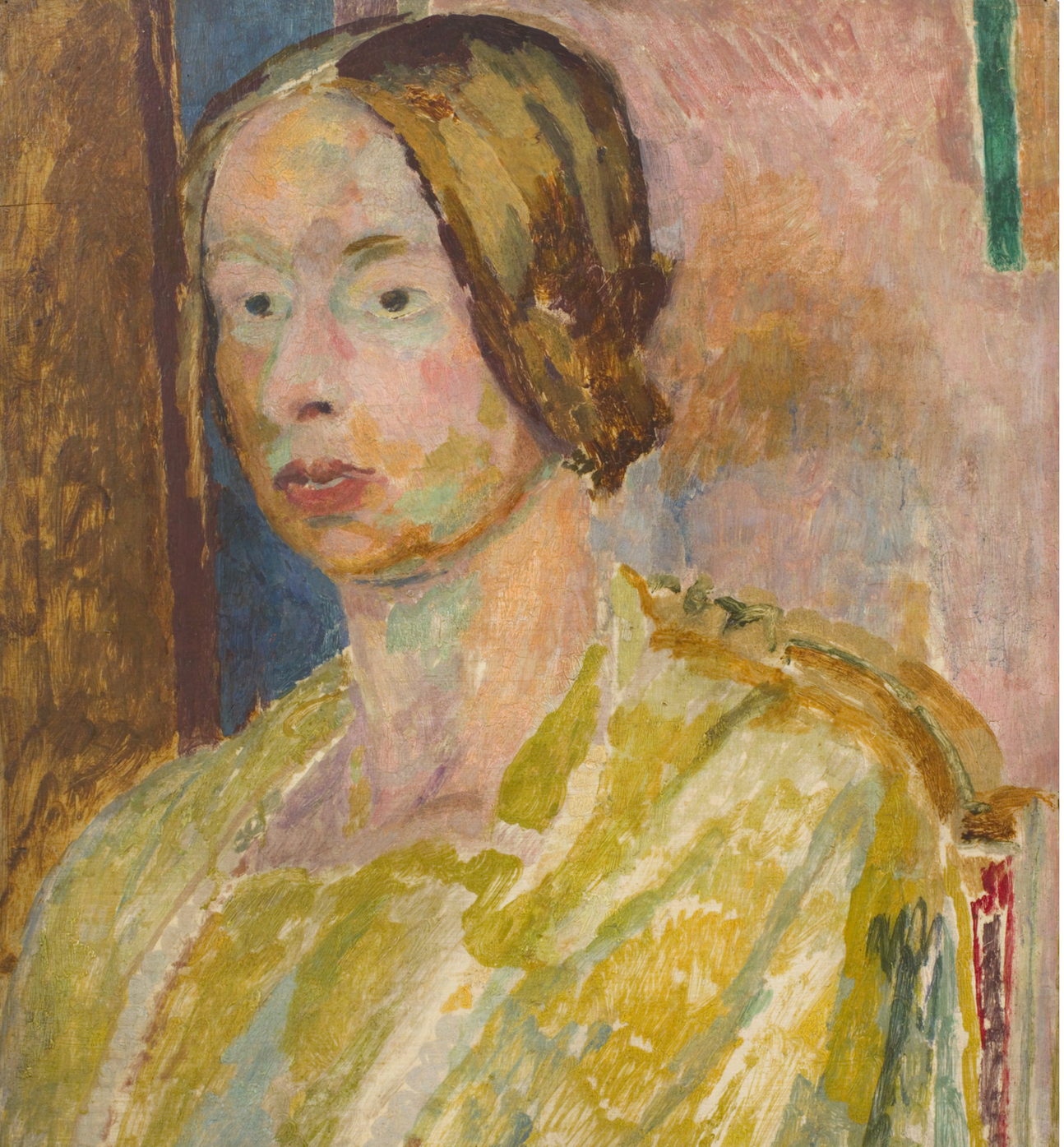
Literature
Richard Shone, Review of Gallery Edward Harvane, *Arts Review,* 10 March 1971, p. 130 (illus.)
Richard Shone, *Bloomsbury Portraits,* Phaidon, 1976, p. 176, pl. 106
Richard Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant,* Tate Gallery Publishing, London, 1999, p. 105.

This portrait depicts Mary Hutchinson, Duncan Grant's second cousin, and is one of the artist's more striking post-impressionist likenesses. Intelligent, wealthy, and cultured, Mary collected paintings by leading avant-garde artists of the day, including Matisse, who drew her portrait in 1936. A patron of the Omega Workshops and a renowned hostess, Mary and her husband, the barrister and politician St John Hutchinson, entertained artists, writers, and intellectuals at their homes in London and West Sussex.

Soon after her marriage in 1910, Mary was introduced to Grant's circle of friends. Clive Bell, who was married to Vanessa at the time, was enthralled by Mary and they became lovers, continuing their relationship until the late 1920s. By this point, Vanessa was with Duncan, although the relationship between the two women remained frosty. Although they shared an enthusiasm for modern art, Vanessa and Mary differed in their attitudes towards fashion and society expectations; '*Mary I think is made for salons. Her exquisiteness is not lost upon us but it ought really to be seen by the polite world*', Vanessa once remarked, wryly.[1]

The first sitting for this portrait took place at 46





Gordon Square in February 1915, where Vanessa lived and kept a studio. Mary sat for Duncan and Vanessa at the same time, though the sitting was not a great success. Vanessa wrote to Roger Fry soon after: '*On Friday we painted Mary. Duncan got very desperate and began his again, which I think I ought to have done too, but I didn't.*'[2] Duncan finished his two portraits of Mary, including the present work, at Charleston over several sittings between 16 and 22 April 1917.[3] Vanessa's striking - if uncompromising - portrait of Mary is now in the Tate and is considered one of her defining early portraits. LH & RS

[1] Bell, V. 27 April 1916. *Letter to Lytton Strachey*. In Marler, R. (1993) Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 194-196.
[2] Shone, R (1976), *Bloomsbury Portraits,* Oxford: Phaidon, p. 175, pl. 106
[3] Confirmed in private correspondence between Richard Shone and Mary Hutchinson in 1969.

12

Roger Fry (1866–1934)

Poinsettias
c. 1915

Oil on canvas

35 3/4 x 28 in. (91 x 71.1 cm)

Signed 'Roger Fry' lower left

Private Collection

Provenance
Cyril Andrews;
Private collection, U.K., and thence by descent;
Bonhams, London, 18 June 2025, lot 53, consigned by the above;
Philip Mould & Company, London, acquired from the above;
Private collection, U.K., acquired from the above.

Literature
Randolph Schwabe, 'Flowerpieces by Roger Fry; Carfax and Co.', *The Burlington Magazine*. Vol. 32, No. 178, (January 1918) p. 38;
'Gossip from New York', *Colour Magazine,* May 1918, p.87 (illus.).

Exhibitions
Carfax Gallery, London, 'Roger Fry: Flowerpieces', November 1917;
Charleston, East Sussex, 'Roger Fry', 15 November 2025 - 15 March 2026.

Painted around 1915, Poinsettias in a Vase belongs to a sustained period of concentration on still life in Roger Fry's work, culminating in his exhibition of twenty flower paintings at the Carfax Gallery in November 1917. Among the largest of his flowerpieces, the present painting demonstrates Fry's interest in the structural possibilities of natural forms, informed by his close study of Paul Cézanne.

Fry's interest in Cézanne extended well beyond the exhibitions through which he introduced Post-Impressionism to British audiences in 1910 and 1912. He particularly admired the Cézanne's ability to organise forms of into coherent pictorial structures – concerns that were closely related to Clive Bell's theory of 'significant form', developed through discussions with Fry and articulated in his influential book *Art* (1914).[1] Bell argued that the expressive power of painting resided principally in the relationships between lines, colours and forms, rather than in the subject and story represented.

During the First World War, when opportunities for travel were restricted, Fry increasingly concentrated on painting objects and flowers. As he later reflected in his 1927 monograph on Cézanne, he maintained that still life was the arena where '*we frequently catch the purest self-revelation of the artist*.'[2] Nowhere did he stake this claim





more effectively than in his 1917 exhibition of flowerpieces at the Carfax Gallery.

In *Poinsettias*, the plant's broad scarlet petals and elongated green stems provide the principal structure of the composition. The branching stems establish a loose vertical rhythm, counterbalanced by the angular forms of the papers pinned to the wall at left, one bearing the artist's initials. A dark passage of fabric hung on the right of the composition contrasts with the cooler blue-green tones behind the flowers. This design was influenced by Fry's reading of Okakura Kakuzo's Book of Tea, which advised that nothing should be placed nearby to detract from the flowers unless the object is aesthetically balanced with them.

Complete with its original hand-painted frame, this painting is one of only a small number of his celebrated wartime still-life works to remain in private hands. ES

[1] Clive Bell, (1914) *Art*. London: Chatto & Windus.
[2] Roger Fry, (1927) *Cézanne: A Study of His Development*. London: Hogarth Press, p. 41.

13

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

Portrait of Vanessa Bell ('The Red Hat')
c. 1917-18

Oil on panel (possibly an old door from Charleston)

46 1/8 x 30 3/4 in. (117.2 x 78.1 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance

The artist, until 1977;
Richard Shone, bequeathed by the above, until 1987;
With Anthony d'Offay, London, until December 1988;
Private Collection, UK, until 2023;
Philip Mould & Company, acquired from the above;
Private collection, UK, acquired from the above, 2024.

Exhibitions

London, Tate Gallery, *Duncan Grant: A Retrospective Exhibition*, May - June 1959, no. 38; Cambridge, Arts Council Gallery; Newcastle upon Tyne, Laing Art Gallery; and Hull, University Art Gallery, Portraits by Duncan Grant, Nov. 1969; Dec. 1969 - Jan. 1970; and Jan. - Feb. 1970, no. 24;
New York, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, *British Modernist Art 1905-1930*, Nov. 1987 - Jan. 1988, no. 134.
Sussex, Charleston Farmhouse, The Faces of Bloomsbury, 7 February–14 April 2024;
Copenhagen, The Nivaagaard Collection, *The Bloomsbury Group, The Art of Life*, 6 March - 10 August 2025.

Literature

Duncan Grant: A Retrospective Exhibition. London: The Tate Gallery, 1959, no. 38, p. 26;
British Modernist Art 1905-1930. New York: Hirschl & Adler, 1987, no. 134, p. 134 (illus.).
Bloomsbury-Gruppen: Kunsten at leve, Copenhagen, Nivaagaards Malerisamling, 2025, p. 71 (illus.)

This is one of Grant's most striking portraits of Vanessa Bell. It was painted at Charleston during the Second World War, around the time Grant and Bell conceived their first and only child, Angelica. It is painted on a substantial, thick-panelled wooden board, most likely a repurposed door, reflecting the couple's resourceful, opportunistic approach during these wartime years.

Bell is shown seated, wearing an evening dress and a red cloche hat; beside her is a curtain made from a toile de jouy acquired in Paris. In both scale and composition, *The Red Hat* is a standout example in Grant's oeuvre from this period and shows the striking deployment of stylistic and compositional traits inspired by French modernism and the School of Paris. Staring straight out at the viewer with a still, serious expression, the present work has echoes of Cézanne's portrait *Madame Cézanne in a Red Dress* (1888–90) [fig. 13]. Cézanne's paintings dominated the 1910 and 1912 Post-Impressionist exhibitions staged by Roger Fry, and his artistic theories became intrinsic to Grant's artistic development. Although it is unlikely that Grant ever saw Cezanne's portrait in person, he may have been familiar with it through an illustration included in Ambrose Vollard's *Cezanne* published in 1914.







Fig 13 | Paul Cézanne, *Madame Cézanne in a Red Dress,* 1888–90, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Although Grant painted several portraits of Bell at this date, this work is distinguished by its ambition, scale and presence. It shows a departure, if only momentarily, from the use of intense colour which typified his work from the preceding years, with a greater emphasis on emotional connection and visual narrative.

The work was included in Grant's retrospective exhibition in 1959 and remained in his possession until his death. LH & RS

14

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

Still Life in the Garden Room at Charleston
c. 1917–19

Oil on canvas

28 x 24 in. (71 x 61 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Private collection, acquired from the above, and thence by descent;
Sotheby's, London, 3 December 2003, lot 6;
Richard Green, London, acquired from the above;
Private collection, acquired from the above;
Philip Mould and Company, London, acquired from the above 2026;
Private collection, acquired from the above, 2026

Painted in the Garden Room at Charleston, this still-life by Duncan Grant reveals the characteristic fusion of colour and texture for which his most accomplished works are known.

Outdoor painting was curtailed in wartime England, so Grant returned repeatedly to the still-life genre, using objects around the house, both old and new, as his inspiration. This work shows a selection of flowers placed in an old coffee pot, still in the Charleston collection [fig. 14].

A group of wartime still-life works were exhibited in his first one-man exhibition at the Carfax Gallery in early 1920. One of these works was acquired by John Maynard Keynes and is now at King's College, Cambridge [fig. 1]. It follows the present composition, but it is painted in a more conventional style without the playful perspective and the modulation of brisk blocks of colour. At this date, Grant would often paint two or three versions of a composition to experiment with colour, drawing and perspectives.

Compared with the more naturalistic composition, Grant here abandons descriptive colour and coherent recession. The coffee pot is so freely reimagined in colour as to bear only a loose relation to its actual appearance, and the







Coffee pot, early 19th century, glazed ceramic, maker unknown, Italy. In possession of Duncan Grant by 1915, Charleston, East Sussex, CHA/C/29a.

surrounding elements are compressed into a shallow arrangement of interlocking planes. The significance of colour was explored beyond that canvas at Charleston, and almost immediately upon their arrival, Grant and Bell set to work redecorating the house's surfaces with colour and painted motifs. It was an ongoing project that, like their art, developed in parallel with their tastes and interests. ES & RS



Fig. 14 | Duncan Grant, Still Life with Flowers, c. 1918. The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge

15

Roger Fry (1866-1934)

St Francis of Assisi, after Cimabue
c.1917

Oil on board

25 x 10 1/2 in. (63.5 x 26.5 cm)

Philip Mould & Company

Provenance
The artist;
By descent to his granddaughter;
Court Gallery, Somerset;
Philip Mould & Company, London, acquired from the above, 2024.

Roger Fry strongly advocated studying the work of the Old Masters, especially early Florentine painters. In 1917, he curated the 'Exhibition of Omega Copies and Translations' at the Omega Workshops, featuring twenty-three works copied from or influenced by Old Master paintings. Fry exhibited eight works. In the preface to the catalogue, he describes how copied works "[...] *are hardly ever literal; they do not pretend to be; they are perhaps better termed translations. They have, no doubt some relation to the original, but they do not profess to give the spectator the same feelings as the original. They are, in fact, independent works of art.*"[1]

In April 1917, Fry, probably referring to the present work, wrote to Vanessa Bell, "*I'm copying a St Francis out of his big fresco at Assisi*"[fig.15]. With "*enlightened eyes*", Fry was drawn to how, by studying the fresco's forms in detail, "*one finds just the kind of purposeful distortion and pulling of planes that you get in El Greco and Cézanne and the same kind of sequence in the contours.*"[2]

The present work relates to a painting in St Hilary Church in Cornwall [fig.16]. Between the two world wars, St Hilary became the setting for Anglo-Catholic Ritual, with local artists contributing to the decorative interior scheme. Bernard Walke, the vicar of St Hilary, later recalled: "*The painting above the Altar of St. Francis owes its existence to a lunch I had with Roger Fry at a*





Fig. 15 | Cimabue, *Our Lady in Majesty* (also known as *Madonna and Child, Angels and St Francis*), Lower Basilica of St Francis of Assisi.



Fig. 16 | Roger Fry, *St Francis of Assisi*, early 1920s, Oil on canvas, St Hilary Church, Penzance.

restaurant in Bloomsbury. Roger Fry, whom I then met for the first time, talked brilliantly on art and its relation to religion, especially the Catholic religion, of which he expressed his intense dislike. Waiters stood round waiting for us to finish our lunch and go, but Roger Fry went on talking about the Catholic Faith. When we did rise from the table he placed a hand on my shoulder and said, 'I would like to paint a picture of St. Francis for your church.' And so the picture was painted and set above the altar of the saint."[3]

The present work served as the prototype for the larger St. Hilary canvas, which is smoother in execution and more resolved in the background, befitting a work intended to educate and inspire a church-going audience. LH

[1] Roger Fry, Preface in 'Copies and Translation catalogue' quoted on p. 53.
[2] Roger Fry to Vanessa Bell, Durbins, 6 April 1917. *The Letters of Roger Fry*. ed. Denys Sutton, London: Chatto & Windus, 1972, p.408.
[3] Bernard Walke, Twenty Years at St Hilary, Truro: Truran, 2002, pp. 108-9.

16

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

Winter through Window (46 Gordon Square)
1920

Oil on canvas

30 x 25 1/4 in. (76.2 x 64 cm)

Private Collection

Provenance
The artist;
Sir Michael Sadler;
Roger Senhouse;
Barbara Bagenal;
Private collection.

Exhibitions
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 'Two centuries of English Art', 1936, no.59;
The Leicester Galleries, London, 'A Selection of works from the collection of Sir Michael Sadler', 1944, no.174;
The Arts Council, 'Decade 1920-30', 1970, no.16

Painted in 1920, this landscape – the latest work in this exhibition – depicts a view from one of the most significant addresses in the history of the Bloomsbury Group. Looking out across the snow-covered gardens of Gordon Square, Duncan Grant brings together the familiar surroundings of Bloomsbury's London home with the still-life subjects that had occupied him throughout the preceding decade. The painting dates from the year of Grant's first solo exhibition at the Paterson-Carfax Gallery, marking a new stage in his recognition as a leading figure in British modern painting.

The house at 46 Gordon Square had been occupied by Vanessa Bell and her siblings Virginia, Thoby and Adrian Stephen since 1904, following the death of their father, Sir Leslie Stephen. As orphans, they moved from Kensington to Bloomsbury in a deliberate departure from the conventions of their Victorian upbringing. The house became the setting for the informal gatherings of artists, writers and intellectuals known as 'The Friday Club' from which the Bloomsbury Group emerged. Its visitors included Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, Roger Fry and John Maynard Keynes, and Grant.





Although Bell and Grant moved to Charleston in Sussex in 1916, they maintained close connections with Gordon Square, returning to London regularly. Keynes, who had occupied rooms in the house since 1916, took over the lease in 1918. That same year, he commissioned Grant, assisted by Edward Wolfe, to decorate the doors, fireplace and shutters of his first-floor sitting room. The house thus remained a centre of Bloomsbury's social life and an important setting for the artists' decorative work.

In the present painting, Grant looks out through the tall sash window towards the square's gardens, where the bare branches of the trees are astutely outlined against the snow. In the foreground, a ceramic jug and fruit rest upon a small table, their warm ochres and reds contrasting with the pale winter landscape beyond. The central window frame divides the composition vertically, and the balcony establishes a strong horizontal division between the interior and the garden; these architectural elements provide a stable structure, within which the irregular contours of the trees are carefully balanced. The inclusion of objects in the foreground recalls Grant's earlier experiments with still life, particularly those undertaken alongside Vanessa Bell at Asheham House, though the still life here is notably much more sculptural in comparison with Grant's more fragmented paintings of 1912–14. ES & RS

Authors' Biographies

Richard Shone is an art historian, art critic, and leading scholar on Bloomsbury art. From 2003 until 2015 he was the editor of The Burlington Magazine. He has published, and contributed to, books and exhibition catalogues such as *Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and their Circle* (1976), *The Century of Change: British Painting since 1900* (1977), The Post-Impressionists (1979), *Augustus John* (1979), *Sensation* (1997), *The Art of Bloomsbury Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant* (1999), and *Charleston: The Bloomsbury Muse* (Philip Mould & Company, 2020/21).

Lawrence Hendra is Director and Head of Research at Philip Mould & Company. Lawrence has curated numerous exhibitions for the gallery including *John Smart: A Genius Magnified* (2014), *Cedric Morris: Beyond the Garden Wall* (2018), *Love's Labour's Found: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture* (2020) and *Charleston: The Bloomsbury Muse* (2020/21). In 2019, he edited and published a previously lost manuscript on Ambrose McEvoy, *Divine People: The Art and Life of Ambrose McEvoy*, which was nominated for the long list of the William MB Berger Prize for British Art History (2020).

Ellie Smith is Director at Philip Mould & Company, where she has curated numerous exhibitions and edited publications including *Garden to Canvas: Cedric Morris & Benton End* (2025); *'Fruit of Friendship': Portraits by Mary Beale* (2024); *'Without Hands': The Art of Sarah Biffin* (2022) and *Charleston: The Bloomsbury Muse* (2020/21). She has delivered lectures and contributed on BBC radio programmes on artists including Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Cedric Morris, Sarah Biffin and Mary Beale.

Photographic Credits

Figures 1 and 5: The Charleston Trust; figure 2: Tate, London; figure 3: whereabouts unknown; figure 4: unknown; figure 6: Philip Mould & Company/Art Gallery of South Australia; figure 7: National Portrait Gallery, London; figure 8: The New Art Gallery, Walsall; figure 9: Manchester Art Gallery; figures 10 and 11: The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds; figure 12: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; figure 13: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; figure 14: The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge; figure 15: The Lower Basilica of Assisi, Italy; figure 16: St Hilary Church, Penzance.