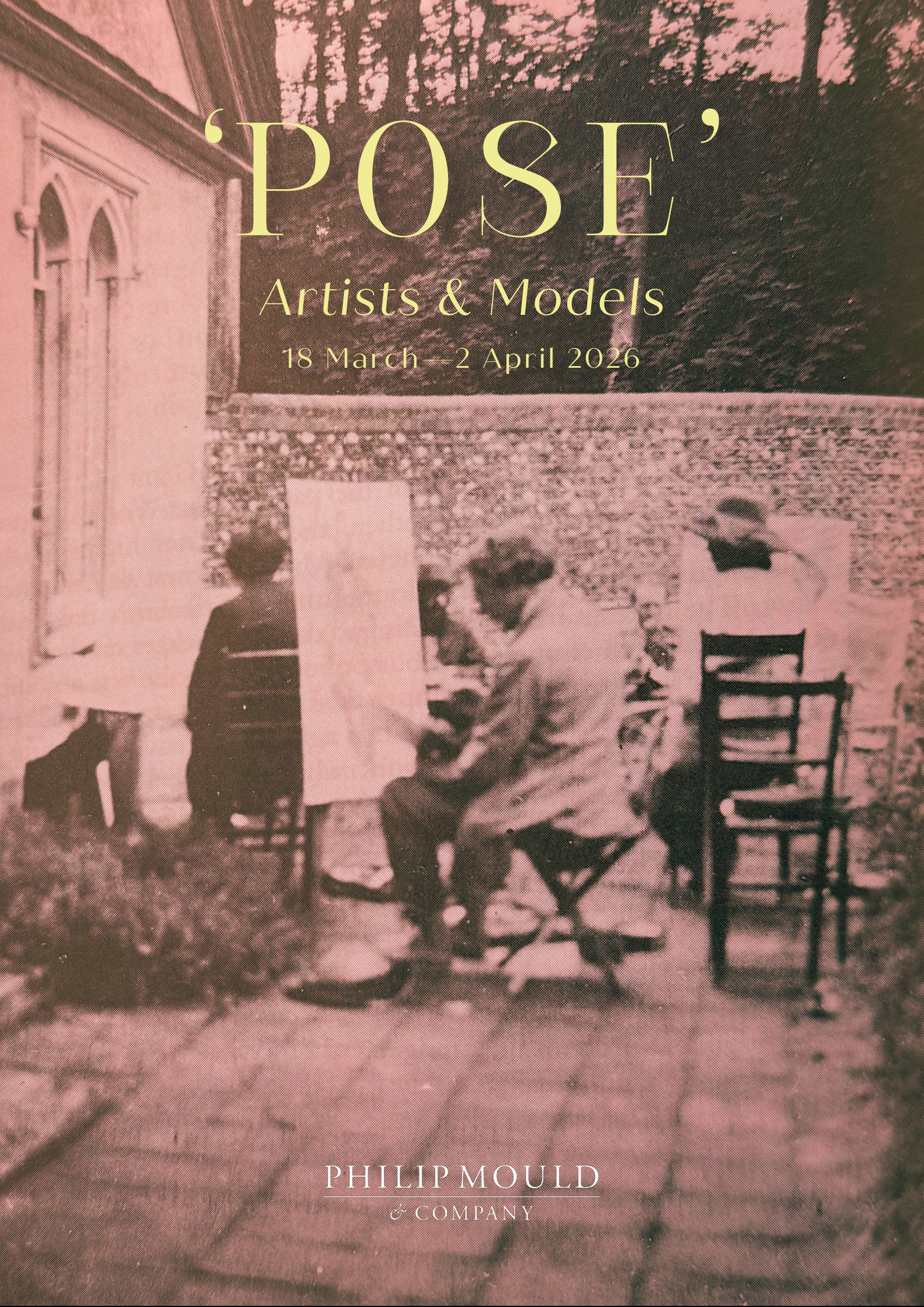




'POSE'

Artists & Models

18 March—2 April 2026

PHILIP MOULD
& COMPANY

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‘POSE’

Artists & Models

‘Pose’: Artists & Models explores the relationships between artists and the individuals they selected to *pose* for them.

For much of its history, portraiture has operated within a system of patronage. Likenesses were frequently commissioned to convey status, lineage, wealth or achievement. These works demanded a careful balance between accuracy and flattery; the sitter’s expectations were integral to the finished image. However accomplished, these portraits were shaped by external requirements as well as artistic intention.

‘Pose’ turns instead to those works made beyond the formalities of patronage. When artists select their own models, the terms of engagement shift. Artists might employ professional models, but sometimes they rely on friends, family members or partners. When a genuine relationship exists between artist and sitter, the whole working process often assumes a greater freedom.

Familiar sitters can be reconfigured, stylised, or quietly observed over a period of years with a candour and informal flexibility that would be unthinkable in the production of a formal, commissioned portrait. This often results in works that feel more intimate, occasionally playful, and frequently more experimental and progressive.

This display also makes clear the importance of the model. In many cases, a figure recurs across an artist’s work, becoming integral to the development of style or the exploration of a particular theme. Modelling requires stamina, sensitivity and an ability to inhabit a pose or persona over sustained periods of time. In close collaboration with the artist, the model’s presence and skill shape composition and mood.



1

EDWARD BURRA (1905-1976)

Portrait of William Chappell

1928

Oil on canvas
24 x 14 7/8 in. (61 x 38 cm)

Signed 'Burra' (lower right)

REQUEST PRICE



Edward Burra's *Portrait of William Chappell* is a rare example of his work in oil rather than the watercolour medium for which he is celebrated. Painted in Paris during the formative years of Burra's early career, it was gifted directly to Chappell and remained in his family until 2008.[1]

Burra and William 'Billy' Chappell first met while studying at Chelsea Polytechnic in the mid-1920s. Their friendship quickly deepened into a close creative and social companionship that endured for decades. The pair travelled widely together, most notably to Paris, which exerted a profound influence on Burra's developing artistic vision. Throughout the late 1920s, they returned repeatedly to the French capital and the Mediterranean ports of the south, immersing themselves in the vitality of urban nightlife – cinemas, circuses,

music halls and cafés – environments that populated Burra's vivid depictions of modern life.

The intensity of their friendship is well attested in the lively correspondence that passed between them over many years. Burra's letters reveal a tone of affectionate irreverence, addressing Chappell by a succession of playful nicknames including "the Marquis C", "our old tart of a Chappell", and the theatrical "Fishnet Annie".[2]

Chappell is depicted here in a tightly framed composition, his gaze directed forward with a cool, steady intensity. Burra has concentrated his painterly attention on the sitter's face, modelling its planes with careful tonal transitions that emphasise the strong geometry of the jaw and cheekbones.



William Chappell by Barbara Ker-Seymer. Tate, London.



Edward Burra and William Chappell in Fitzroy Square, by Barbara Ker-Seymer, c.1942-5.
Estate of William Chappell.

The eyes, rendered in a striking pale blue, provide the focal point of the composition, lending the portrait a sense of psychological presence. By contrast, the clothing and background are treated more loosely, the brushwork is less descriptive, allowing the sitter's features to dominate the canvas.

Although formally composed, the painting retains a quiet immediacy, suggesting the familiarity that existed between artist and sitter. The portrait captures Chappell at a moment of youthful promise. Following his student years, he pursued a career in dance, performing in both cabaret and classical ballet before later turning to stage design, where he achieved

considerable success, most notably designing productions such as *Swan Lake* at the London Coliseum in 1947. Yet here he appears simply as Burra's friend, composed, self-possessed, and quietly charismatic.

[2] Andrew Causey, (1985) *Edward Burra: Complete Catalogue*. Oxford: Phaidon, p. 22.

[3] Simon Martin, (2011) *Edward Burra*. London: Lund Humphries, p. 22.



2

SIMON BUSSY (1870-1954)

Portrait of Dorothy Reclining

c. 1911

Oil on hessian
25 x 32 1/8 in. (63.5 x 81.5 cm)

Signed 'SIMON BUSSY' lower right

REQUEST PRICE

This striking early oil painting by Simon Bussy presents his wife, Dorothy Bussy (née Strachey), in the guise of a reclining Venus. Painted at La Souco, the couple's house in Roquebrune, the work belongs to a formative moment in Bussy's career, when he was exhibiting ambitious figure compositions at the Salon d'Automne, Paris. Though now best remembered for his jewel-like pastels of flora and fauna, Bussy here addresses one of the most enduring subjects in Western art: the reclining female nude. Yet, here, the intimacy of marriage enables a confident reimagining of the classical Venus.

Dorothy and Bussy were well integrated within the orbit of the Bloomsbury circle. Dorothy was the sister of Bloomsbury luminary Lytton Strachey, and often invited the group to her home in Roquebrune, which became a meeting place for figures including Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Virginia Woolf, where artistic and literary experiment flourished.



Dorothy was a writer and translator who drew on her own formative experiences to produce *Olivia* (1949), a thinly disguised autobiographical novel published by the Hogarth Press (a publishing house run by Virginia and Leonard Woolf), which explored female same-sex desire with a candour that was both progressive and quietly radical for its time.

Bussy's depiction of Dorothy is neither coy nor conventionally idealised. The composition recalls earlier treatments of the reclining nude, yet the flattened perspective, emphatic contour and vivid colour place the work firmly within a modernist sensibility. The oranges and lemons that frame the figure anchor the scene in the brilliant light of Roquebrune; their presence was remarked upon by visitors, including Lytton Strachey, who described the "*brilliant orange and lemon trees*" surrounding the house.



3

DOD PROCTER (1890-1972)

Gwendoline

c. 1929

Oil on canvas
26 3/8 x 27 in. (67.1 x 68.6 cm)

Signed 'Dod Procter' lower left

REQUEST PRICE

Dod Procter was a leading figure of interwar British art, renowned for her monumental nudes and introspective portraits which fused Newlyn naturalism with classical modernism. This sensitive work belongs to a remarkable sequence of figure paintings of the same model, Gwendoline, produced at the height of Procter's fame.

This sitter appears across multiple works of this period, including *Virginal* (c.1928–29), *Summer Bed Time* (c.1929), and later head studies such as *The Pearl*

Necklace (c.1932–41). Such repetition is characteristic of Procter's practice during these years: she returned to a chosen model over sustained campaigns, refining pose and mood. The present work stages the figure within a private, curtained composition. Drawn aside by the sitter's hand, heavy drapery creates a shallow, theatrical space. Procter's treatment of flesh is cool and silvery, built up through densely worked, subtly modulated layers of paint—a manner for which she became well known—creating a weighty, sculptural presence that lends her figures a sense of



Dod Procter, *Morning*, 1926. Tate, London.

solidity. The classical evocation of curtain and drapery links the work to her most celebrated painting, *Morning*.

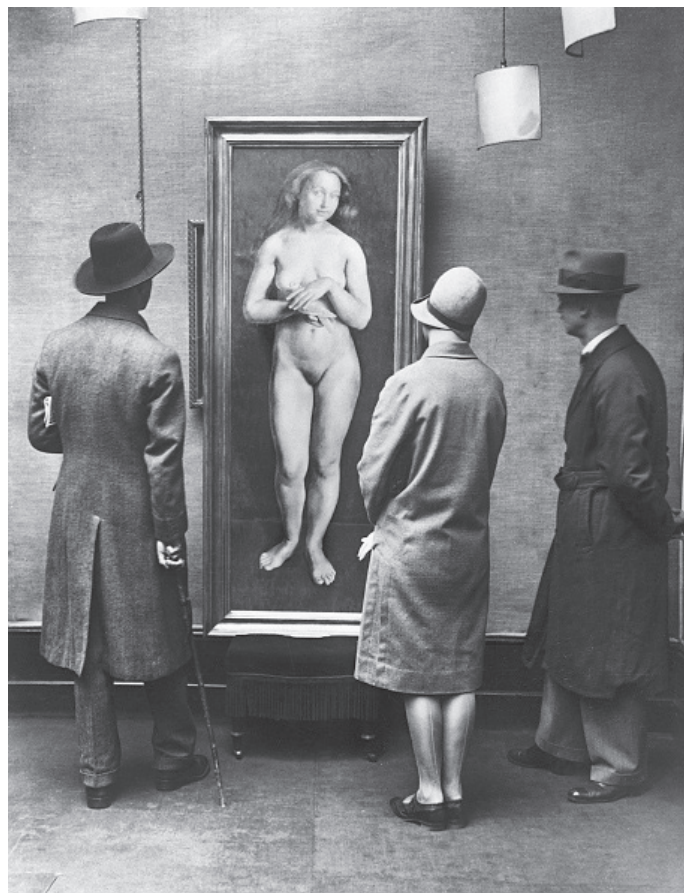
Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1927, *Morning* was voted 'Picture of the Year' and purchased for the nation by the Daily Mail, generating extraordinary publicity and establishing Procter in the words later used by the National Portrait Gallery, as 'the most talked about living artist in Britain'.^[1] The painting subsequently toured Britain for two years following its exhibition in New York, cementing her international reputation. It was within this atmosphere of acclaim, and intense public scrutiny, that Procter continued to explore the theme of the solitary female nude.

That scrutiny became controversy in 1929, when her painting *Virginal* – depicting the same model as the present work – was refused by the Royal Academy on grounds of nudity, a decision widely reported in the press. Later that year, the

painting was exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, London, where it appeared alongside another nude of the same sitter, *Summer Bed Time*.^[2] Contemporary coverage noted that the model was a girl of sixteen who had posed for both works. The inscription 'Gwendoline', written on the reverse of the stretcher of this work, confirms her identity. Her repeated presence in Procter's studio at precisely the moment of the artist's greatest public visibility suggests that she was central to Procter's evolving conception of the modern nude.

1] Dod Procter, The National Portrait Gallery. [Available via: https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp16178/doris-margaret-dod-procter-neeshaw?utm_source]

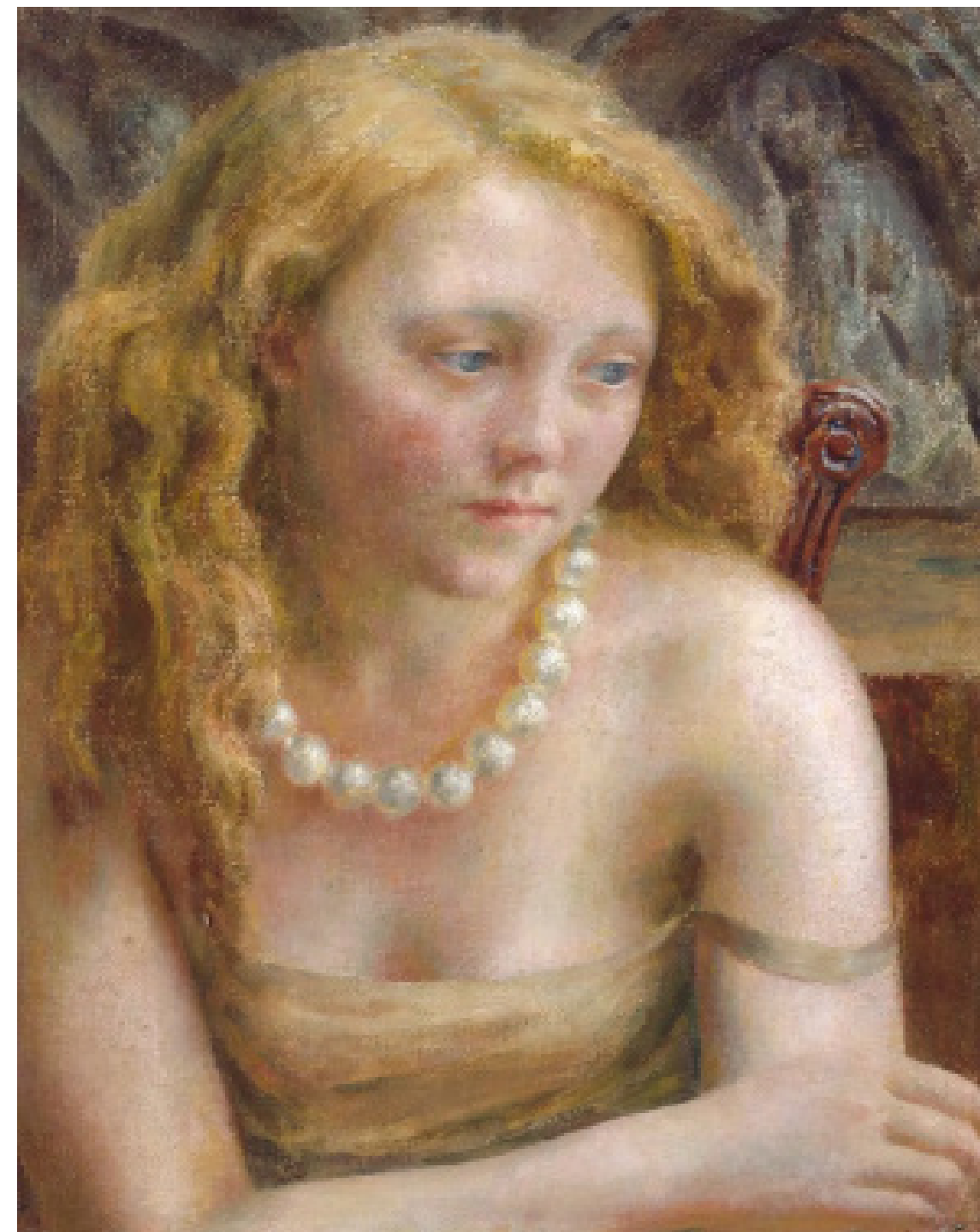
[2] *The Sketch*. Wednesday 11 December 1929.



Dod Procter, *Virginal*, 1929. Getty Images.



Dod Procter, *Summer Bed Time*, c.1929.



Dod Procter, *The Pearl Necklace*, c.1932-41. The Royal Academy of Art, London.



4

DUNCAN GRANT (1885-1978)

The Green Man

c.1940-42

Oil on canvas
39 x 29 in. (99 x 74 cm)

REQUEST PRICE

This striking composition was produced as a design for a pub sign around 1940-1942. The work formed part of a scheme initiated by Elizabeth Winifred Martin, the wife of Kenneth Clark, who was invited to edit a King Penguin volume devoted to English pub signs. The project paired contemporary artists with historic public houses, inviting them to design new signs. Among those commissioned were several leading modern British painters, including Duncan Grant, Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash and John Piper. This work by Grant was designed for 'The Green Man', a subject long embedded in the visual folklore of British pub signage.

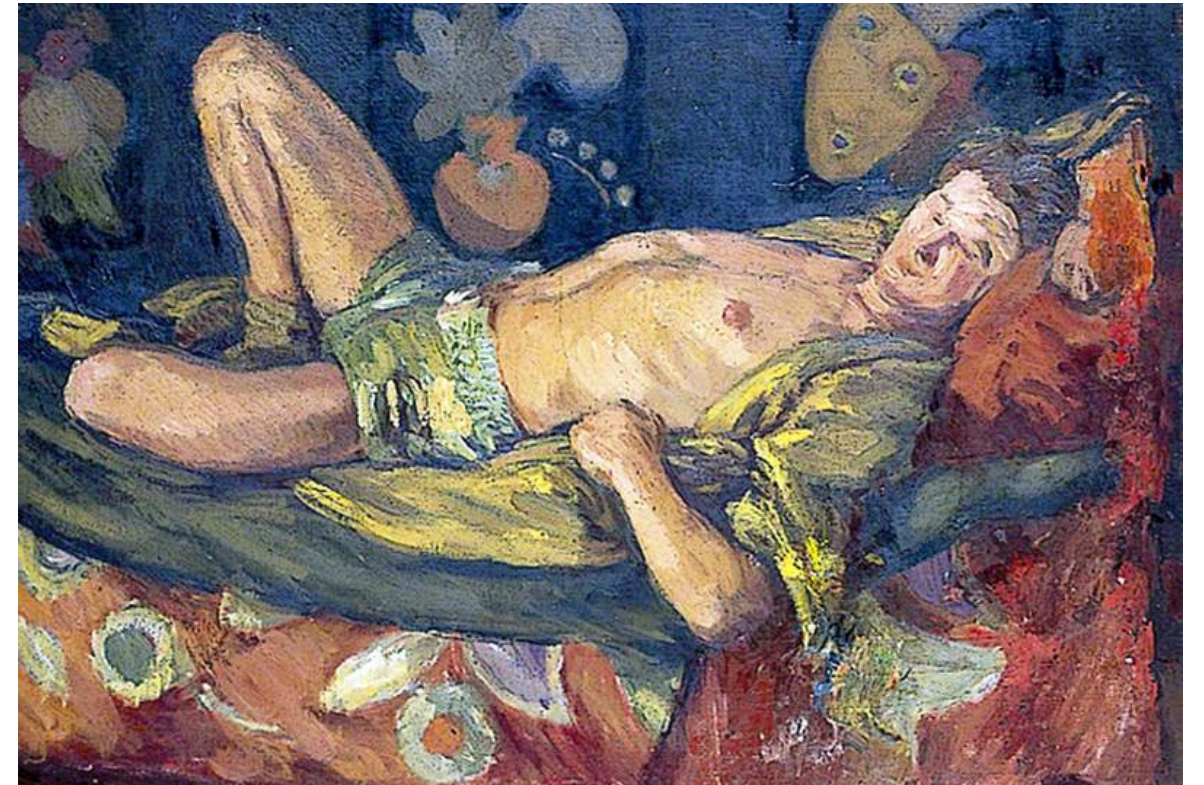
The identity of the figure in Grant's

design has been suggested to be Paul Roche; however, this is unlikely to be the case. Grant did not meet Roche until 1947, several years after the present work was likely executed. The association is nevertheless understandable. Roche would later become one of Grant's most frequently depicted sitters, appearing repeatedly across paintings and drawings in a variety of guises.

The two men first met in 1946 outside Piccadilly Circus tube station and remained close friends for the next thirty-two years until Grant's death in 1978. Roche, who was thirty at the time, started modelling for Grant the day after their chance encounter. He later recalled the experience with



Duncan Grant, *Paul Roche Nude*, c.1951.



Duncan Grant, *Paul Roche Reclining*. Charleston and the Estate of Duncan Grant.

candour, observing that “*Though it was the summer, two things I realised as a model: you soon get tired of even the very easy pose... [and] it seems warm but you begin to feel cold.*”[1] Roche’s striking presence and theatrical bearing appealed strongly to Grant, who depicted him in numerous roles and guises. Over time, he became not only a regular model but Grant’s closest companion during the final phase of the painter’s life.

The patterned background relates to an abstract fire screen, decorated with a central goldfish motif, that remains today in the collection at Charleston, East Sussex. Grant frequently returned to visual ideas developed during the Omega Workshops period, incorporating motifs or designs from earlier decorative projects into later paintings, though few examples

are quite so bold as this. This deliberate self-reference recalls the spirit of Omega, where the boundaries between fine and applied art were deliberately blurred.

[1] Paul Roche quoted in P. E.H. Davis ‘Painter’s Model and Poet: Paul Roche’, *Canvas Issue 23* [Accessed at: <https://www.charleston.org.uk/painters-model-and-poet-paul-roche/>]



Duncan Grant, *The Green Man*, c.1940-42.



Duncan Grant, Design for a fire screen panel, 1916. The Charleston Trust.



5

DUNCAN GRANT (1885-1978)

Portrait of Edward Wolfe

c. 1921

Oil on board
28 x 20 in. (71.1 x 50.8 cm)

Signed and inscribed 'TEDDY WOLFE / DG'
on the reverse

REQUEST PRICE



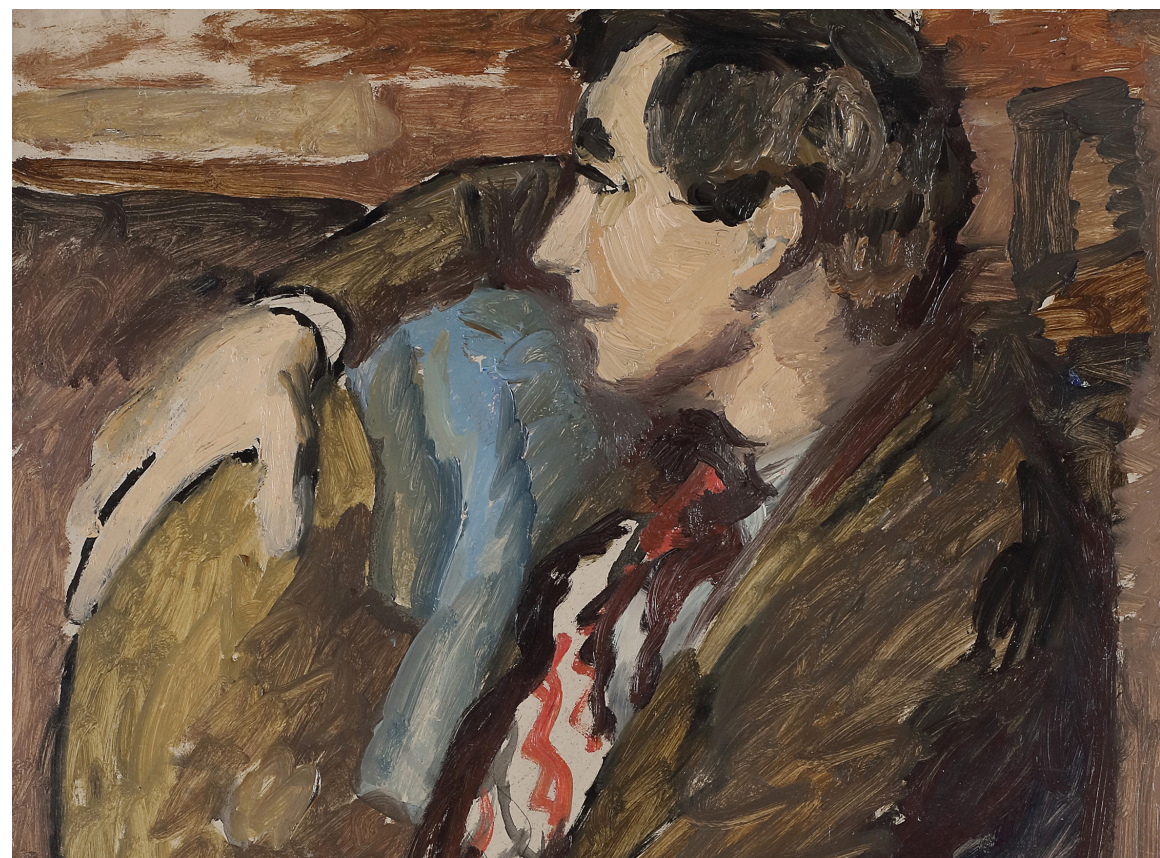
A leading figure within the Bloomsbury Group, Duncan Grant is well known for his portraits of friends, lovers and fellow artists. His contemporaries often commented on his 'special gift for painting portraits', particularly portraits of those he loved; 'there has always been a very serious and searching element in Grant's character, an aspect of his mind which shows itself in the best of his portraits'.[1] Such is the case in this vibrant depiction of the young painter Edward 'Teddy' Wolfe, a close friend of Grant's, within Bloomsbury's extended artistic circle.

Grant's interest in Wolfe was both artistic and personal. Early in their friendship Grant is said to have pursued Wolfe romantically (an advance Wolfe gently declined), yet this did nothing to diminish their affection, and the two remained lifelong companions within the Bloomsbury milieu. This portrait stands as a testament to that relationship.

The painting itself has a striking spontaneity. Wolfe sits informally, his body turned away as though caught mid-thought, the pose suggesting the easy



Edward Wolfe by Gordon C. Abbott. Gift of Mrs. Gordon C. Abbott.



Portrait of Edward Wolfe (1897-1982), detail.

rhythm of conversation rather than the formality of a posed sitting. Grant's brushwork is lively and expressive: broad, confident strokes build the figure with remarkable economy, allowing colour and gesture to carry the composition. One can almost imagine the two artists talking as the portrait takes shape, Grant responding instinctively to his friend. Such vitality would have been difficult within the constraints of a commissioned portrait. Instead, the work reflects the freedom afforded by familiarity. It is a portrait which captures the fleeting energy of a shared moment.

Painted around 1921, it marks an exciting moment in the careers of both artists.

Grant had by this time established himself as one of Britain's leading contemporary painters for his boldly coloured works influenced by Post-Impressionism. Wolfe, meanwhile, stood at the threshold of his own artistic ascent. The years that followed proved decisive for his career and throughout the 1920s he produced the vividly coloured portraits and still lifes that would later earn him the nickname 'England's Matisse'.

[1] A. Clutton-Brock, (1959) 'Round the London Art Galleries', *The Listener*. May 21, 1959, Vol. 61, Issue: 1573.



6

HAROLD HARVEY (1874-1941)

Madonna of the Bridges

1930

Oil on canvas
23 5/8 x 20 1/8 in. (60 x 51 cm)

Signed 'HHarvey' lower right

REQUEST PRICE



One of the leading figures of the Newlyn School and a lifelong painter of Cornwall, Harold Harvey brought to his work a deep familiarity with both place and people. In *Madonna of the Bridges*, he draws on contemporary models to reinterpret an enduring Renaissance archetype, recasting the Madonna and Child within the sensibilities of modern life.

At first glance, the setting of *Madonna of the Bridges* might be mistaken for the canals of Venice. In fact, Harvey situates his composition in Newlyn Coombe, Cornwall, a landscape he knew intimately, having spent almost his entire life in West Cornwall. Described by Caroline Fox and Francis Greenacre as ‘the only artist from two generations of Newlyn painters who could truly be called a “son of Cornwall”’, Harvey brought

to his work a deep understanding of the rhythms and textures of local life. Here, the bridges of Newlyn are transformed into a setting of quiet monumentality, their arching forms framing the central figures with a structural gravity that is both physical and symbolic.

Painted in 1930, four years after Harvey’s conversion to Catholicism, the work marks a significant moment in the artist’s spiritual and artistic development. *Madonna of the Bridges* belongs to a group of works in which Harvey reimagined religious scenes, usually set against recognisable local backgrounds. In another depiction of Mary, Joseph and Jesus in *The Flight*, the wild Cornish moor sets the backdrop of the biblical scene.



Harold Harvey, *The Flight*, 1925. Private collection.



Attributed to Angelos Akotantos,
Icon of the Mother of God and Infant Christ (Virgin Eleousa),
c. 1425–50. Cleveland Museum of Art.



Harold Harvey, *Madonna of the Bridges*, detail.

This power of *Madonna of the Bridges* lies in the subtle fusion of the sacred and the everyday. Rather than relying on overt drama or spectacle, Harvey allows meaning to emerge gradually through careful structure and subtle symbolism. With a quiet nod to Marian iconography, the mother's blue blouse is rendered as ordinary clothing and the child's gesture, pressing close in an intimate embrace, recalls the tenderness of the *Eleousa* type Madonna and Child. Harvey avoids overt theatricality, and the effect is one of quiet, controlled symbolism. The enclosing

stone arches behind the figures assume an almost halo-like presence, their curvature gently framing the mother and child and anchoring them within the physical world.



7

STEPHEN TOMLIN (1901-1937)

Lytton Strachey

c. 1929

Plaster (painted)
18 3/4 in. (47.5 cm) high

REQUEST PRICE

“The general impression is so superb, that I am beginning to be afraid that I shall find it rather difficult to live up to.”
—Lytton Strachey, 1929

Of the principal representations of Lytton Strachey, none are as affecting as this likeness, which can be considered one of Stephen Tomlin’s masterpieces. Strachey’s expressive features, heightened by the visible marks of modelling, result in a portrait which is at once affectionate and unsparing, conveying something of the intellectual intensity for which Strachey was widely revered within Bloomsbury.

The bust was conceived during the summer of 1929, when Tomlin spent an extended period at Ham Spray, the Wiltshire home shared by Strachey, Dora Carrington and her husband Ralph Partridge. Much like Charleston, the Sussex home of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, Ham Spray functioned as a lively centre of Bloomsbury social and artistic life. Visitors passed constantly through the house where conversation, music and

work unfolded in equal measure. Tomlin, who had become a welcome guest there, spent much of that summer in residence with his wife Julia Strachey. When she departed, Strachey invited the sculptor to remain for a further fortnight so that he might complete the portrait.

Strachey had been anticipating the work for some time, having advanced Tomlin £30 in December 1928 to secure the commission. While Carrington painted in her studio above the former granary, Strachey sat for Tomlin. In the evenings, they met with other guests in the music room, where they played the piano, listened to music, and danced to songs on the gramophone. Strachey’s own account of the sculptural process was characteristically wry. “*I sit all day to Tommy,*” he wrote, “*who is creating what appears to me a highly impressive, repulsive, and sinister object.*”



Stephen Tomlin with his bust of Lytton Strachey at Ham Spray, 1929.
King's College, Cambridge; estate of Frances Partridge.



Dora Carrington, Stephen Tomlin, Lytton Strachey, Walter John Herbert ('Sebastian') Sprott,
by Lady Ottoline Morrell, 1926. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Yet despite this mock alarm, the finished work delighted him: "*The general impression is so superb, that I am beginning to be afraid that I shall find it rather difficult to live up to.*"

In celebration of Tomlin's triumph, Strachey held a private unveiling party inviting 'the influential inhabitants of Bloomsbury to come and look'. A finished example, cast in either bronze or lead, was displayed in his sitting room and David Garnett's glowing review of the evening paints a picture of pride on Strachey's part, and exceptional ability on Tomlin's: '*I went round to Lytton's room & found him laying out sherry glasses & stuffed olives; I had chanced on a private view of his bust which I think is the most distinguished & accomplished head you have ever done.*'

The present work is the artist's surviving plaster which resulted in three recorded

casts in produced between 1929 and 1930. This work was retained by Tomlin as a showpiece in his studio. A plaster of similar status depicting Virginia Woolf is now in the collection at Charleston and has been hand-painted in a similar manner to the present work.

[1] Lytton Strachey, quoted in O. Garnett, *The Sculpture of Stephen Tomlin*. 1979.

[2] Lytton Strachey, *Letter to S. Tomlin*. September 1929. Julia Strachey Papers, UCL Special Collections, D2.

[3] David Garnett, *Letter to Stephen Tomlin*. 1 December 1929, Julia Strachey Papers, UCL Special Collections, D3.

[4] David Garnett, *Letter to Stephen Tomlin*. 1 December 1929, Julia Strachey Papers, UCL Special Collections, D3.

STEPHEN TOMLIN (1901-1937)

Julia Tomlin (née Strachey)

1928

Ceramic (unglazed)
16 7/8 in. (43 cm) high

REQUEST PRICE



This portrait of the artist's wife was completed the year after their marriage. Sculpted during what Tomlin described as the happiest point of his life, it expresses a moment of joy and clarity within the artist's otherwise turbulent life.

Julia Strachey came from one of the most intellectually distinguished families associated with Bloomsbury. She was the daughter of the civil servant Oliver Strachey and Ray Strachey (née Rachel Pearsall Conn Costelloe), an influential campaigner for women's suffrage. Julia herself possessed formidable creative talents. A gifted writer, actor, painter and musician, she moved freely through the social world of the 1920s, becoming

associated with the fashionable milieu of the 'Bright Young Things'.

Julia was particularly close with her uncle, Lytton Strachey. It was at Lytton Strachey's home, Ham Spray, that she met her future husband, Stephen Tomlin.[1] Both Tomlin and Strachey spent the long summers of 1925 and 1926 at Ham Spray. Tomlin became increasingly infatuated and wrote her frequent love letters during their time apart.[2] They married on 22 July 1927 at St Pancras Church in London and settled soon afterwards at Mill Cottage in Swallowcliffe, Wiltshire. It was there, during the early years of their marriage, that Tomlin executed the present bust.



Julia, 1930s. National Portrait Gallery, London.



Stephen Tomlin and Julia sitting in the doorway of his studio at Swallowcliffe. King's College, Cambridge.

Stylistically, this marks an interesting departure from Tomlin's early technique, as seen in his bust of Lytton Strachey [cat 7], in which he left visible the rough marks of the individual clay pellets he pressed into the surface of his sculptures. Another glazed cast of this sculpture was painted by Duncan Grant, who also decorated the detachable base in his characteristically decorative motifs.

The newly married couple considered the early years at Swallowcliffe some of the happiest of their lives. Strachey was permitted the time and space to concentrate on her writing and diligently focused on her own productivity. Their proximity to Ham Spray ensured that the couple remained closely entwined with the lives of Lytton Strachey and Dora Carrington. Carrington longed for time with Julia Strachey just as Lytton Strachey yearned for Tomlin, but the couples never expressed jealousy or rivalry. In fact, Carrington expressed her delight in

sharing her love for Julia with Tomlin: '*it's a great consolation for me to have another lovesick bird to sing duets with on the loveliness of my Julia.*'[3] So intertwined was their romance that it was on Lytton Strachey's Ham Spray writing paper, and with Carrington's pen, that Tomlin confessed to Julia '*I seem to be in love with you, damn you.*'[4]

[1] Nino Strachey, *Young Bloomsbury: the generation that reimagined love, freedom and self-expression*. London: John Murray (2022), p.75-76.

[2] Lytton Strachey quoted in Michael Holroy, *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography*. Vol. II (1968), p.569.

[3] Dora Carrington, *Letter to Julia Strachey*, Summer 1926 quoted in Anne Chisholm, (ed.) (2017) *Carrington's Letters*. London: Chatto & Windus, p.306.

[4] Stephen Tomlin, *Letter to Julia Strachey*. Undated letters from Ham Spray and Heath Studio, Julia Strachey Papers, UCL Special Collections, E1.



9

GERALD LESLIE
BROCKHURST (1890-1978)

Anaïs with Hair Down

c. 1920s

Watercolour and ink on paper
21 x 14 1/2 in. (53.3 x 36.8 cm)

REQUEST PRICE



At the time this work was made, Anaïs was central to Brockhurst's artistic production. Throughout the 1920s she modelled for many of his paintings, drawings and etchings, including *Le Beguin* (1922) and *By the Window* (1922). Her likeness became synonymous with his refined, closely observed style. In *Anaïs with Hair Down*, the artist's sensitivity to texture through the soft diffusion of watercolour against the sharper articulation of ink, echoes the precision of his printmaking but retains the spontaneity of works on paper. The looseness of her hair, cascading over her chest, lends the image an air of intimacy. It is less formal than his later society portraits, and less concerned with status than with presence.

Anaïs was herself an artist, and her perspective would have been valuable to Brockhurst's process. Working with a sitter so attuned to the mechanics of picture-making allowed for a more searching and possibly collaborative exploration of portraiture. As an informed participant, she almost certainly brought her own sensitivity to arrangement and expression. In this sense, it is tempting to believe that Anaïs' pose – chin raised – and compositional poise was shaped by shared understanding between husband and wife.



10

AUGUSTUS EDWIN JOHN (1878-1961)

Iris Tree

c. 1919

Pencil on paper
13 1/4 x 9 5/8 in. (33.5 x 24.5 cm)

Signed 'John' lower right

REQUEST PRICE



This intimate sketch by Augustus John depicts the artist and rebellious modern woman, Iris Tree. Clearly of personal significance to Tree, this portrait remained in the collection of the sitters' family for almost a century. Few of John's sitters could claim to rival him in their disregard for social convention, but Iris Tree was one such figure.

The youngest of three daughters of the actor-impresario, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917), Tree grew up surrounded by actors and artists. By the age of eleven she had sat for her first portrait, a work by William Nicholson; this was to be the first of many likenesses of Tree that were produced over the course of her lifetime by artists ranging from Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant to Man Ray. Like John, they were drawn to Tree for her vivacious personality and striking

appearance. She even had cameo role in *La Dolce Vita*, Federico Fellini's cult film of 1960.

From the time of her arrival at the Slade School of Art in 1913, Tree was determined to defy the social and moral strictures of the day. Cutting her strawberry blonde hair into a short bob, she dressed in bold combinations of clashing colours and dresses, often designed herself.

Tree first met Augustus John in the year after her arrival at the Slade. The pair met at a Thursday soirée thrown by the society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell. Tree arrived wearing a dress adorned with blue and green ribbons that she had designed herself, mismatching stockings – one blue and the other green – and a wide-brimmed hat without a crown. Of John, she would later recall in an unpublished



Iris Tree, possibly by Man Ray, 1923.



Iris Tree and Augustus John, 1925. National Portrait Gallery, London.

essay *In Praise of Augustus John* how: ‘at first meeting I experienced an immediate intimacy as if I was part of his landscape which has remained in my vision ever since. It has rounded hills, pale or slateblue skies, grey rocks. Its people were angels dressed as peasants, women who baked crusty bread [...] There was lavender in the coarse linen and brown or blue jugs of thick cream. Jars of wine were served under their vines to scowling men who drank into the night of love-making, singing, dancing. But there’s another point more difficult to define except romantically for it was essentially romantic.’ [1]

John, for his own part, was captivated by Tree. During sittings, he told her how he loved her ‘freckles and shadows’. Such was John’s fondness for Tree as a model that she came to stand as a representative for the whole class of rebellious women whom John so loved to depict. In his memoir, *Chiaroscuro*, he recalls how it was at a dinner party thrown by Tree’s

then-husband Moffat that John first had a successful experience with hashish. ‘I had already tried smoking this celebrated drug without the slightest result’, he writes, but ‘Having helped myself to the first dose I had almost forgotten it when, catching the eye of Iris Tree across the dinner table, we were both simultaneously seized with uncontrollable laughter about nothing at all’. [2]

John drew and painted Tree on several occasions. Likely executed in c. 1919, John renders Tree’s features through delicate shadows in pencil. This informal and evidently personal drawing is a nod to the friendship which developed between artist and sitter.

[1] Iris Tree, quoted in Daphne Fielding, (1974) *The Rainbow Picnic: A Portrait of Iris Tree*. London: Eire Methuen Ltd, pp. 52-53.

[2] Augustus John, (1924) *Chiaroscuro: Fragments of Autobiography*. London, p. 134.



11

FRANK DOBSON (1886-1963)

Portrait head of Mary Jewels

1920

Bronze

Height, 9 in. (22.5 cm)

REQUEST PRICE



Frank Dobson is widely recognised, alongside Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Jacob Epstein, as one of the key figures in the emergence of modern British sculpture in the early twentieth century and an important precursor to the work of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. This striking bronze head of his sister-in-law, the Cornish artist Mary Jewels, belongs to a formative moment in Dobson's career, when he was exploring new sculptural languages in the years immediately following the First World War.

The portrait was conceived shortly after Dobson's return to the Cornish fishing village of Newlyn in 1919. The area had long attracted artists, but in the years

following the war it became a particularly vibrant centre of artistic exchange. Dobson quickly formed close connections within this creative community, including with the painter Cedric Morris, who assisted him in his workshop and also sat for a sculpted portrait. Within this atmosphere, Mary Jewels also began to pursue painting with increasing seriousness.

Jewels's own artistic development was characteristically independent. Although she initially sought guidance from Morris, he famously declined to instruct her directly and instead handed her four tubes of paint and a canvas and told her to cover it by the end of the day.[1] The resulting confidence in her instinctive approach led Jewels later to remark that she was



Dobson in the studio, with his bust of Mary Jewels in the background, early 1920s. Dobson Estate.

‘influenced by nobody and entirely self-taught. A true Celt, loving my Cornwall.’^[2] Her paintings of the Cornish landscape and its inhabitants possessed a deliberate naivety and intensity of observation that distinguished her work within the local artistic milieu.

Dobson, meanwhile, was undergoing a process of discovery in sculpture. Having originally trained as a painter, his artistic outlook had been profoundly altered by Roger Fry’s landmark 1910 exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*. Encountering the work of artists such as Paul Gauguin and the influence of African and Oceanic art revealed to Dobson the expressive possibilities of modern sculpture.

The present bust bears clear traces of this transformation. The head is rendered with an emphatic simplicity – Jewels’s features are distilled into broad planes, the eyes with a deeply searching gaze appropriate to a portrait of an artist. Only two casts of this bust are known; one was given to Dobson’s wife, Cordelia, the sitter’s sister, and the present work which was exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in 1921.

[1] Lawrence Hendra, (2018) *Cedric Morris: Beyond the Garden Wall*. London: Philip Mould & Company, p. 14.

[2] David Wilkins, (2017) *The Alfred Wallis Factor: Conflict in Post-War St Ives Art*. Cambridge, p. 92.

