

Modern Romantics

Modern Romantics

Modern Romantics

2012



www.messums.com

8 Cork Street, London W1S 3LJ
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7437 5545

Introduction

We have always been conscious of the soft atmosphere and the changeable climate of our sea-washed country... It has affected our art as it affects our life. But it has not resulted in congenital softness of vision. – John Piper

In 1936, when John Piper took a driving tour to photograph England's monuments and churches, the world at large was taking sides, both politically and culturally. Fascism had infected Italy, Germany and Spain, was spreading throughout Europe and the Near East, and had even reached Britain. The battle for a modern free world also became a struggle for what constituted modern free expression.

It may be axiomatic to say that because Britain is an island nation the British tend to look inward towards a common centre instead of outward towards a shared frontier. But to a large extent this is still true, particularly when it comes to British art. Now well into the second decade of a new millennium, Britain still enjoys a complicated relationship with its romantic past, and this ambivalence is particularly evident in how it defines 'modernism'. Often, modernity in pre and post-war British art is measured by comparing it with whatever was happening across the Channel at the time. But this kind of cultural relativism might warp how we understand and enjoy so much of twentieth century British art, because not only is a great deal of it figurative, it is also specifically British.

Artists like de Staël, Beckmann, and Morandi could paint figuratively and still be termed 'modern', if not necessarily French, German, or Italian. But a truism endures that pre- and post-war British artists could only be 'modern' if they either embraced politics or pure form. Fascinating and influential as a lot of British art can be by this definition, it ignores the fact that before WWI and throughout the post-WWII era, many figurative painters and sculptors were making a significant and largely British contribution to modern cultural history: neo-romanticism.

Before and after WWI, British artists, as well as composers and writers, began to re-discover and re-evaluate the vernacular of their unique cultural history. Ancient craft and building techniques, folk songs and even native speech patterns became the source material for ground breaking works by Edwin Luytens, Ralph Vaughan Williams, A. E. Houseman and Gerard Manley Hopkins. In the decades following its brutal interruption by WWI, neo-romanticism re-emerged when artists revisited the works of J. M. W. Turner, William Blake and Samuel Palmer. These artists' aims were complex and varied, and neo-romanticism took on many different guises, depending upon the individual. But, broadly speaking, the neo-romantics pursued a utopian ideal; that of a shared past expressing a personal sense of space that was rooted in and entirely shaped by the topography, traditions, and temperament of the British Isles.

A recent dedicated study by Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, examines how throughout the first half of the 20th century, neo-romantic concepts and ideals helped influence several key aspects of British culture. Her book is primarily focused on literature, but over several chapters addressing architecture and interior design, cuisine, cottages, country houses and suburban sprawl, Harris makes the compelling argument that British neo-romanticism was more than just an attempt to reconstitute the green and pleasant land lost after 1918. Its associated ideas of seasonal renewal, focus on detail over form, notions of the ancestral and atavistic, ancient rites and village greens variously informed paintings and prints by John Piper, Stanley Spencer and Graham Sutherland; poetry by Stevie Smith and W. H. Auden; operas by Benjamin Britten, and the films of David Lean and Powell & Pressburger. Moreover, Harris noted how several artists developed conflicted feelings regarding concepts of purity and significant form, and whether there ever could be a clear delineation between living an artistic life and an 'ordinary' one.



Ruskin Spear RA NEAC, 1911–1990
The Enthusiast oil on board 51 x 76 cms 20% x 29% ins (DETAIL – see no 51)

Once identified, neo-romanticism emerges recognisably in much of the art, design, writing, and music of the post Roger Fry – pre-pop art eras, appearing and reappearing in painting, poetry, prose and music with the tenacity of field poppies, or perhaps more appropriately, daisies in a country house lawn. It arose largely out of the landscape tradition in British painting but neo-romanticism extended deep into almost every other genre. Related notions of national identity resound in the work of John Nash; an artist who refused to believe that in order to be modern, he had to stop being English. It is also present in William Brooker's subtly observed interiors, which returned to post-war Britain 'a part of [its] own temperament'.¹ Ecological awareness and a passion for the natural world informed works by Cedric Morris and Adrian Berg. Likewise, a direct engagement with the land, as well as a keen sense of the lyrical power that inclement weather exercises over it, is reflected in paintings by David Bomberg, Ivon Hitchens, Clifford Fishwick and Mary Potter. Its corollary, a frequent absence of sunlight, inspired artists as diverse as Eardley Knollys, Rose Hilton, John Hoyland, Albert Irvin, Donald Hamilton-Fraser, John Miller and Alfred Wolmark to use colour as an expression in its own right.

Finally, the British gift for storytelling coupled with the poetic elasticity of the English language in works by John Betjeman, Evelyn Waugh, Somerset Maugham, E. M. Forster, the Sitwells, Ronald Blythe, and Elizabeth David variously inspired works by Sutherland, Nash, Morris, Mary Newcomb and John Minton. Moreover, Duncan Grant's Berwick murals, Stanley Spencer's sacred take on his native Cookham, and even Ernest Proctor's Cornish holidaymakers remind us that the British tradition for pictorial narrative did not disappear with Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. In fact, this illustrative tradition found new

expression in the tonal anecdotes of Walter Sickert and Spencer Gore, and continued in Minton's delineated melancholy and the wry wit of Ruskin Spear.

In his 1936 re-evaluation of Fry's remarkable impact on modern taste, Sir Kenneth Clark contended that pure formalism, for all its arguable merits, was effectively irrelevant to the British creative imagination. Modernism in British art, like Impressionism, may have originated on the continent, but once transplanted to England, it quickly developed its own vernacular. Based on their strong literary traditions, this is hardly surprising, and as Clark also pointed out, the British are a literary people so 'we should not complain when our painting reflects this'.²

One criticism of neo-romanticism is that it tended to lack an adequate conception of evil in the modern world. This is not entirely unfounded, but one glance at pre and post WWII literature shows how contemporary British writers were all too aware of evil. As a reaction to this, they developed an unrivalled talent for building plausible fantasy worlds. T. H. White, J. R. R. Tolkien and Mervyn Peake created in Camelot, Middle Earth and Gormengast microcosms of Britain that were vivid, dynamic, and self-contained. Arguably, the tangible appeal of these alternative make-believe Britains may be one reason the popularity of these books has outlasted the courageously stripped-back prose of the so-called 'Kitchen Sink' writers. Because instead of looking back in anger to challenge the status quo, these modern romantics looked inward in an attempt to reclaim what they believed to be truly British.

¹ A. Graham-Dixon, *A History of British Art*, London: University of California Press, 1999, p. 220.

² See Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2010, *passim*.

Andrea Gates
Art Historian and Archivist for Messum's

Mary Newcomb, 1922-2008
Self Portrait in a Dream, Sept '56
oil on board 80 x 52 cms 31 1/2 x 20 1/2 ins (DETAIL - see no 39)



Adrian Berg RA, 1929–2011

1 Regent's Park, June, 1969

oil on canvas 50.8 x 41 cms 20 x 16½ ins signed lower right; and signed, dated and inscribed on the verso



After reading literature at Cambridge, Adrian Berg studied medicine and education before enrolling in the Royal College of Art in the late 1950s. By the time he graduated in 1961, the two strongest streams in British art were the so-called 'Situation' painters, including John Hoyland (see cat. no. 26) and pop art, as expressed by several of Berg's RCA contemporaries, including Derek Boshier, R. B. Kitaj and Patrick Caulfield. However, Berg's earlier grounding in maths and scientific observation led him in a different direction altogether: landscape painting.

That same year, Berg moved into a flat in Gloucester Gate overlooking Regent's Park, where he was to live and work for the next 24 years. While his earliest works were grid paintings, even as early as 1962, he began to paint landscapes of the park that were visible from his flat.

His approach was mostly empirical and motivated by his desire to capture various levels of visual perception. Like David Bomberg and Miles Richmond, he believed that perception was transitory, that the senses could only convey the specific, never the totality of the external world. Instead of basing his parkland views on a single point perspective of a specific place at a particular time, he built his compositions around a multiplicity of views: the trees, patches of foliage and pond reflections repeated and arranged into a coherent whole. Long before David Hockney took his camera to Joshua Tree to make his now famous kaleidoscopic photo collages, Berg, throughout the 1960s into the mid-1980s, combined scientific observation, a deep sense of tradition and his own painterly skills to make these increasingly ambitious landscapes, which were based simply on the view from his window.

David Bomberg, 1890–1957

2 Slope of Navas – Peñarrubia, 1935

oil on canvas 67 x 51 cms 26½ x 20¼ ins signed and dated lower right



Provenance:
Private collection, acquired directly from the Artist;
Private collection.

David Bomberg was born in Birmingham, and trained as a lithographer before moving to London in 1908 to study painting at the Westminster School of Art and the Slade. Just before WWI, he went to France where he met Modigliani and Picasso, but more importantly, he became a signing member of BLAST, the Vorticist manifesto. His paintings from this period combine abstract and Vorticist influences, and while they illustrate a maverick drive to drastically change the direction of contemporary British painting, Bomberg refused to become an actual member of the Vorticist movement.

With the advent of World War I, his outlook profoundly changed, both personally and creatively, largely due to his horrific firsthand experiences of mechanized war. Consequently, his angular pre-war style became

more fluid and organic. Throughout the 1930s, in an effort to exorcise his creative demons and reconcile his ambivalence towards the world around him, Bomberg focused on landscape. And the landscapes of Asturias and northern Andalusia exercised a particular appeal on his creative imagination. Moreover, according to his biographer, Richard Cork, the Spanish landscape perhaps also mirrored his conflicting political ideals of that time.¹

Bomberg first travelled to Spain around 1933, settling first in Cuenca and then farther south in Ronda. In 1935, he painted this mountainous view much farther north, near Peñarrubia in Asturias, just shortly before he and his family were forced to return to England as the Spanish Civil War advanced.

¹ See Richard Cork, *David Bomberg*, New Haven and London, 1987, pp. 101–113.

Reginald Brill, 1902–1974

3 Buoy and Chains, Harwich
ink and wash on paper 67.4 x 90.2 cms 26½ x 35½ ins signed lower right



Provenance:
with the Phoenix Gallery, Lavenham.

This would appear to be a preparatory study for an oil on board of the same subject, with some compositional differences, which was also previously with the Phoenix Gallery! Reginald Brill's work is similar to that of Stanley Spencer in that he was primarily interested in capturing scenes from daily village life using simplified forms, and stylized perspective. Earlier in his career he also concentrated on working class oriented themes, but whatever his subject matter, he showed a meticulous sense of detail and keen eye for the extraordinary present in the everyday.

Brill began his studies at the Slade under the instruction of Henry Tonks. He graduated in 1924 and three years later, was awarded the Prix de Rome, which enabled him to travel throughout Egypt, Greece and Italy. He finally returned to London in 1933 when he took up the post of Headmaster at Kingston School of Art. He held this post until 1962, and throughout his career he was also an active member of Surrey's artistic community, and much admired for his tireless support of his students.

¹ *Buoys at Harwich*, signed lower right, oil on board, 90.8 x 115.6 cms 35¾ x 45½ ins, sold Christie's South Kensington, 2 November 2000, lot 189.

Peter Brook RBA, 1927–2009

4 Croft House
oil on canvas 121.9 x 183 cms 48 x 72 ins signed lower left; and inscribed with title center right



Provenance:
James Mason Collection, Lausanne, until 1984;
Clarissa Kaye-Mason, Hollywood, until 2010.

Exhibited:
Thomas Agnew & Sons, London, 1972.

Peter Brook first met James Mason in 1969, when the actor was in Bolton filming *Spring and Port Wine*. They were introduced by one of Mason's co-stars, Rodney Bewes, a friend of Tom Courtenay, who admired and collected Brook's work. Bewes and Mason often visited Brook at his Brighthouse home, and based partly on a shared interest in the landscapes and towns of their native West Riding, the three men formed a lasting friendship.

Mason also became a keen supporter of Brook and collector of his work. In 1971, upon the death of his father, he commissioned this elevation view of Croft House, the Mason family home in Huddersfield. Brook probably knew Croft House and possibly even made direct studies. However, the painting's planar composition and sepia-toned palette – typical of Brook's work – suggests that he might also have been inspired by an early photograph of Croft House, possibly even one included in the extensive collection of Victorian and Edwardian photographs he purportedly owned.

Peter Brook RBA, 1927–2009

5 Across the Valley

oil on canvas 50 x 60 cms 19½ x 23¾ ins signed and inscribed with title lower center



Provenance:

James Mason Collection, Lausanne, until 1984;
Clarissa Kaye-Mason, Hollywood, until 2010.

Exhibited:

Thomas Agnew & Sons, London, 1972.

While Brook's work is occasionally compared to that of L. S. Lowry, and to some extent, Carel Weight, the technique he developed and his personal involvement with landscape were entirely his own. Brook initially began to paint landscapes in thickly mixed oils, but quickly found this technique unsatisfactory for capturing the specific textures, shapes and light of the

Brighouse surroundings, which were his chief inspiration. To give his paint surface more substance, he began to mix in very finely ground sandstone from a nearby quarry. He found that the increased heft and texture achieved made an intriguing contrast with the horizon line and the planes of the sky, which he would paint far more thinly, using rags, rollers or even his fingers.

6 Old Man Thinking

oil on canvas 30.5 x 31 cms 12 x 12¼ ins signed lower right; and inscribed with title lower left



Peter Brook was born in the Pennines, and after a period in London training at Goldsmiths College, he returned to Yorkshire, where he spent the majority of his career painting the surrounding West Riding countryside, and villages near his home at Brighouse. After discovering a cache of Victorian photographs of the area, Brooks became fascinated by the graphic and tonal qualities of the images and began to use them to incorporate what became a kind of lucid nostalgia into his more immediate views of everyday Yorkshire. These photographs inspired him to develop a technique using

several scrim-like layers of thin, smoothly painted oils laid one over the other to create a greater sense of depth, while preserving the essential planar forms of his composition.

Equally, the inscription on so many of these photographs inspired Brook to turn his attention to titles, which became an important part of his work. Alternately adding a sense of poetry, mystery, or even humour to his often superficially stark images, these titles were meant to further engage the viewer's attention and participation.

William Brooker ARA RWA, 1918–1983

7 The Music Lesson, 1953

oil on board 40.5 x 51 cms 16 x 20 1/8 ins signed and dated lower right



Provenance:
Private collection, United Kingdom.

Exhibited:
Possibly Arthur Tooth & Sons Ltd, London, 1953.

William Brooker was born in Croydon and trained at the local School of Art, before wartime service interrupted his studies until 1947, when he continued at Chelsea and at Goldsmiths.

Between 1949 and 1953, when the present work was painted, he taught at Bath Academy of Art in Corsham, where one of his pupils, Howard Hodgkin, described him as "...the only real teacher I ever had... he made one feel that painting was a very important occupation. Quite unique. No one else seemed a bit like that. He was a great teacher".¹ Brooker later progressed from Corsham to teaching posts at other prominent art schools before becoming principal of Wimbledon School of Art in 1969, a post he held nearly up until his death.

Brooker's earlier paintings sit recognisably within the broad framework of English anecdotal impressionism, and are strongly reminiscent of Walter

Sickert's 'pages torn from the books of life'. Andrew Graham-Dixon has argued that the chief legacy of Brooker's return to pictorial realism in his early work was that it lent 'renewed moral and pictorial force to the ideal of an undecieved, disillusioned vision in British art', that in fact, his paintings returned to post-war Britain 'a part of their own temperament'.²

In 1953, Arthur Tooth mounted an exhibition of Brooker's work, from which National Gallery of New South Wales purchased a very similar picture, *Trio Rehearsing*.³

- 1 Quoted by Nick Wadley in his introduction to the catalogue for William Brooker's retrospective exhibition at Newcastle Polytechnic, 1987.
- 2 A. Graham-Dixon, *A History of British Art*, University of California Press, 1999, p. 220.
- 3 *Trio Rehearsing*, 1953, oil on board, 45.7 x 60.2cms, signed and dated lower right, Sydney, National Gallery of New South Wales, inv. no. 9013.

8 Variations on the Divine Proportions: II (Artificial Light), 1977

oil on canvas 63.5 x 76.2 cms 25 x 30 ins signed, inscribed and dated verso



William Brooker was particularly interested in how light can transform even the most innocuous still life arrangement into something dramatic, even suggestive of allegory. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s he moved increasingly away from his earlier anecdotal interior scenes in favour of exploring minimalist still lifes. Composed in studios he kept at Lewes, and subsequently, Carshalton, he painted what he termed his 'variations', simple table-top still lifes, which he lighted as frontally as possible, and painted in

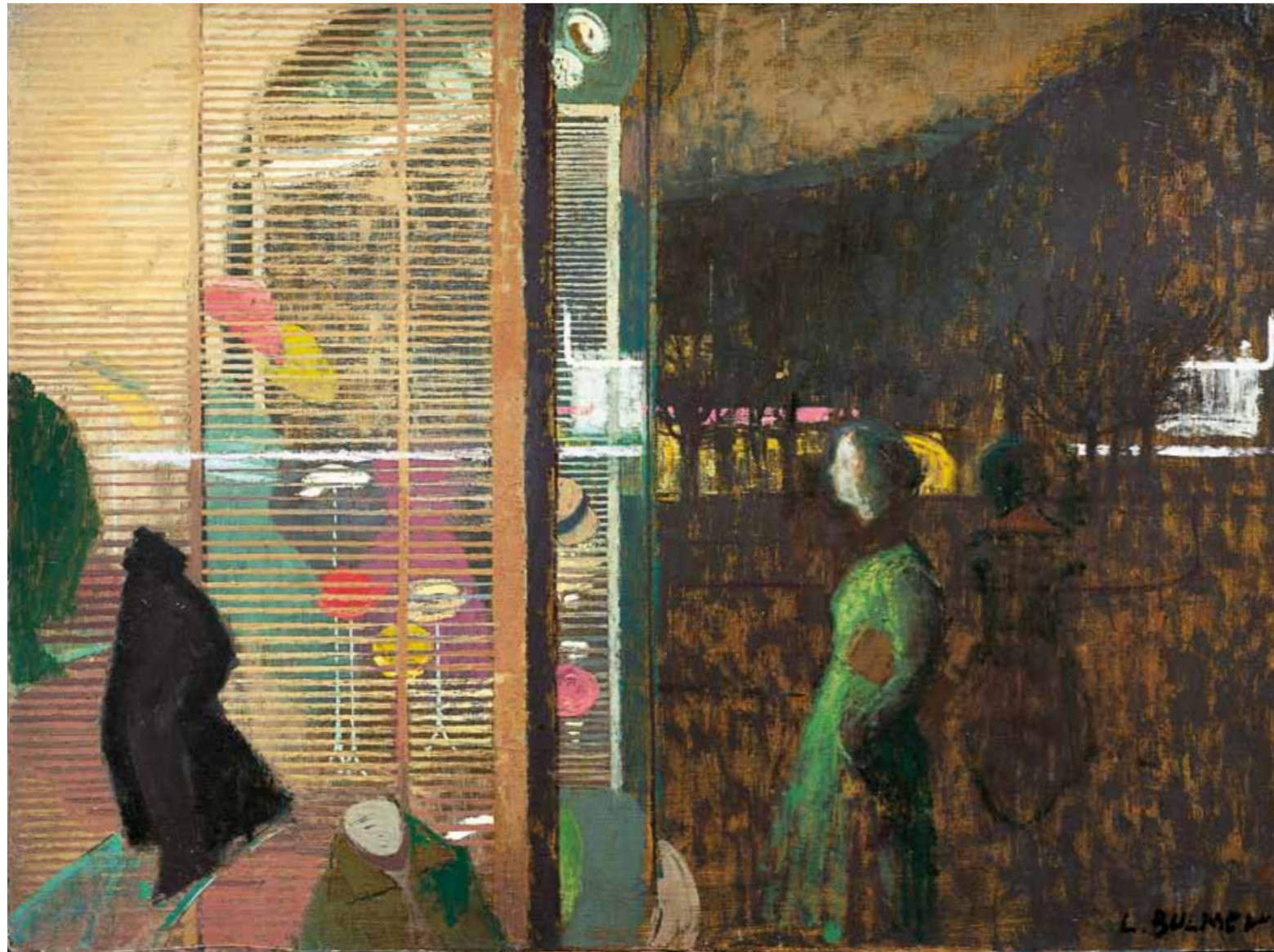
a limited palette of cool greys (or later, warmer buff tones) enlivened with blue. The present work is typical of the direction these 'variations' took by the late 1970s, when Brooker focused more on line, plane and the optical effects of strong electric light.

Another somewhat larger *Variation* dated 1974 is in the Tate Britain.¹

¹ *Still Life, New Studio*, 1974, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 91.4 cms, inv. no. T01983.

Lionel Bulmer NEAC, 1919–1992

9 *New Hats*, c. 1957
oil on board 76 x 102 cms 29 7/8 x 40 1/8 ins signed lower right



Provenance:
The Artist's Studio Estate; Atelier no. 975.

Lionel Bulmer's wife, Margaret Green, identified the location of the shop window as being that of Peter Jones, Sloane Square. The couple lived in Chelsea from the early 1950s onwards, firstly in a flat in Elm Park Gardens, and then in a purpose-built studio in Lucan Place. They spent their weekends exploring the Sussex countryside and the seaside resorts of the south

coast before finally discovering a passion for the coast and countryside of East Anglia.

A series of studies for *New Hats* is included in one of Bulmer's 1957 sketchbooks, now in the collection of the British Museum.¹

¹ London, British Museum, inv. no. 1993,1002.26.1-45.

Maurice Cockrill RA FBA

10 *Landscape I: Landslip Beacons*
oil on canvas 71.1 x 91 cms 28 x 35 7/8 ins signed and inscribed verso



Exhibited:
London, Bernard Jacobson Gallery, 1989.

Born in 1936 in Hartlepool, Maurice Cockrill studied at Wrexham Art School and Denbigh Technical College, before moving on to the University of Reading. Between 1969 and 1980, he taught at Liverpool Polytechnic and became a key figure in the local cultural scene.

After moving to London in 1982, he had his first solo exhibition at the Edward Totah Gallery, and rapidly established an international reputation, with subsequent solo exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf (1985) and with the Bernard Jacobson Gallery, both in London and New York. In 1995, he saw a major retrospective of his work held at the Walker Art Gallery; another was held three years later at the Royal West of England

Academy. Cockrill's work has also been included in several important group exhibitions throughout Europe and in Australia. Between 2005 and 2011, he was Keeper of the Royal Academy, which recently hosted an exhibition of his work (2011).

Cockrill's earlier Liverpool paintings combined pop and photo-realism, and were somewhat akin to those of Adrian Henri, who, like Cockrill, was also an accomplished poetic voice of the 1970s Merseyside art scene. Later in his career, however, his work shifted towards the more neo-romantic expressionism illustrated in this landscape.

Cecil Collins MBE, 1908–1989

11 Fool, 1957

oil on canvas 20.5 x 15.5 cms 8 1/8 x 6 1/8 ins signed and dated lower right and verso



One of the rare religious artists of post-1950s British art, Cecil Collins remains a controversial figure, possibly due to his repeated use of medieval morality play archetypes, such as The Fool, The Angel, The Pilgrim and The Muse. For Collins, these figures symbolized the imagination unbound, what he termed the 'virginity of the spirit', and as such were antithetical to the reductive formalism he believed to be the 'hypnosis of (our) time'.

Collins was born in Plymouth, and served as an apprentice at an engineering firm before winning scholarships to Plymouth School of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. While he was at the RCA, he won the William Rothenstein Life Drawing Prize, and met his wife Elisabeth Ramsden, who was a sculpture student. They lived between London and Buckinghamshire,

where he met Eric Gill, and David Jones. In 1933 Collins went to Paris, saw the work of Paul Klee for the first time, and befriended Mark Tobey.

Collins held his first exhibition at the Bloomsbury Gallery in 1935, which included what came to be recognised as some of his most important early paintings, including *The Fall of Lucifer* (1933). The following year he published a poem in *The New English Weekly* and contributed to the International Exhibition of Surrealism. He also took classes with Tobey at Dartington Hall, where, a few years later, he taught alongside Bernard Leach, Hein Heckroth and Willi Soukop. It was also around this time that Collins began to explore his motif of The Fool in a number of paintings and prints.

Sir Jacob Epstein LG, 1889–1959

12 Reclining Negress

pencil 43 x 56 cms 16 7/8 x 22 ins signed lower left



Provenance:
with The Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield.

Exhibited:
London, Leicester Galleries, *Exhibition of New Sculpture by Jacob Epstein*, 1931, under nos. 6.

Among the seventy-five works included in the 1929 illustrated catalogue of Jacob Epstein's figure drawings, were several depicting a young black woman shown in a similarly recumbent and pensive pose.¹

Unlike much of Epstein's draughtsmanship, which is similar to Matisse in its concentration on line and surface pattern, the present study is far more volumetric, and appears concerned with how light played on the model's skin. Another slightly earlier drawing, *Nude Negress* (1928)² may actually represent the same model, a woman known as Lydia, who was a jazz singer and dancer in London during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Epstein also produced three bronze portrait busts of Lydia, including a study of the dancer laughing, now in the City Art Gallery, Leeds (1929).³ His other favourite models were Amina and Mariam Peerbhoy, known as Sunita and Anita, whom he met at the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley. They subsequently lived in Epstein's home and modeled for him.

Epstein's well-known preference for using African and Asian models was possibly connected to his affinity for non-Western art. Having admired the Egyptian, Assyrian and African sculptures in the British Museum, he eventually amassed an important collection of African art. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that although he might have initially chosen his models for their physiognomy, his studies and finished portraits convey a keen awareness of these women's individual attitudes and personalities.

1 H. Wellington, *Epstein: Seventy-five Drawings*, London: Saville and Co., 1929, nos. 45, 46 and 47.

2 See The Minorities, Colchester, *Jacob Epstein: Drawings and Illustrations*, exhib. cat., 1987, no. 15, illus.

3 See Evelyn Silber, *The Sculpture of Epstein*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1986, nos. 193, 209 and 245.

Clifford Fishwick, 1923–1997

13 *Seascape*, 1959

oil on board
120.5 x 181 cms 47½ x 71¼ ins
signed and dated lower right

Although known as a West Country painter, Clifford Fishwick was born near Accrington in Lancashire. During the 1940s, he trained intermittently at Liverpool College of Art (his studies were interrupted by a stint in the Royal Navy during WWII), and briefly, in New York.

He spent the majority of his career in Exeter, where he was appointed Paintings Master at the College of Art, later rising to Principal in 1958, a post he held for 25 years. The previous year saw his first solo exhibition at St. George's Gallery, Lancashire. Subsequently, Fishwick exhibited his work regularly at the Royal Academy, The Royal Society of Artists, the RWA, in Oxford and elsewhere. In general, however, he was very protective of his work and was known to distrust galleries. He preferred to either keep his paintings or to sell them to friends.

Fishwick's earliest pictures appear inspired by the same organic neo-romanticism that informed works of contemporaries, such as Graham Sutherland. Equally, his paintings from the 1950s are particularly sympathetic

with those of William Scott, who, as head of painting at Corsham, exercised notable influence over other West Country artists, including several of the St Ives painters, including Peter Lanyon, Paul Feiler and Trevor Bell. Fishwick was also a member of the Newlyn Society from 1952, and exhibited at the Penwith Society in the 1950s and 1960s. In general, his later paintings and lithographs drew quite evidently from the Cornish schools, but were also informed by the brushwork, tonalities and sheer drama of Turner and Cezanne, who he cited as key influences. Several of Fishwick's later large semi-abstract coastal land/cloudscapes owe much to Turner, in particular, and are arguably evocative of works by John Martin. But as Fishwick was also a keen yachtsman and rock climber, his approach to landscape was equally influenced by his own encounters with the Exeter coast.

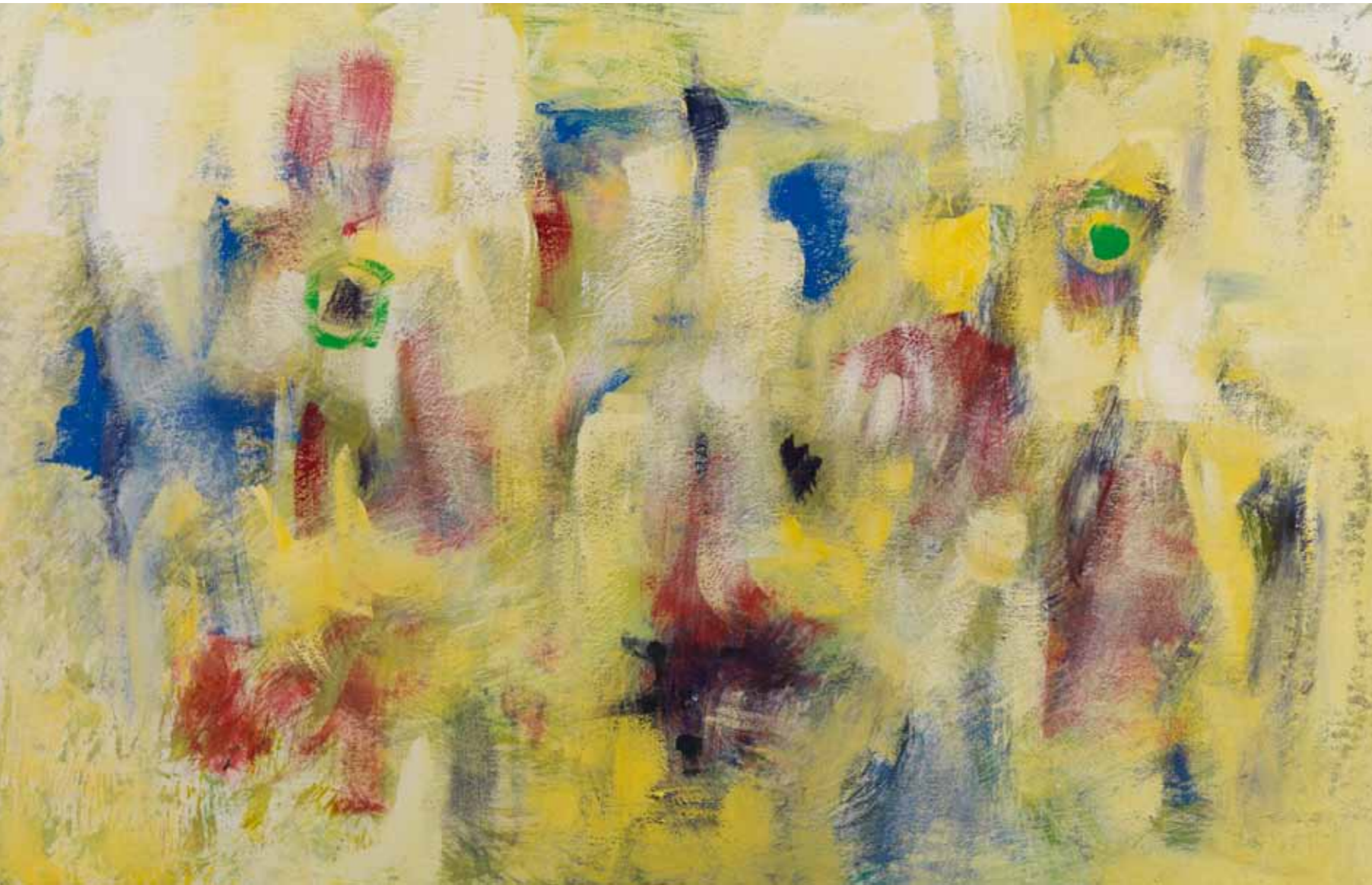
After his death, Exeter College of Art held a retrospective of his work in the foyer exhibition area of the main campus building, which was then renamed The Clifford Fishwick Gallery. Today, several of his works are in important public collections in Bradford, Plymouth, and Exeter.



Michael Forster, 1907–2002

14 A Face in the Crowd, 1996

acrylic on canvas 86 x 134 cms 33½ x 52¼ ins signed with monogram, and inscribed with date and title verso



Provenance:
The Artist's Studio Estate, Atelier no. 895.
Private collection, Devon.

When his wife, Adele died in 1974, Michael Forster's work took on increasingly dark tonalities that did not entirely lift until after 1993, when he married Gloria Ochitwa, a former art dealer and long-time close friend. Gloria provided him with the emotional support and security he sought and many of Forster's late period paintings reflect this. These sparkling works are, like the present picture, painted in vibrant, regenerative palettes and bear similarly upbeat titles such as *Awakening*, *Aurora*, *Sea-change* and *Wake Up Happy*.

When asked about the role of colour in his work, Forster replied: "*I dive into colour as I dive in to a tropic sea. I rejoice in colour. How can we live without it? ... For me, even a good black and white drawing holds a hint of a resounding chord of colour.*"¹

¹ Messum's, *Michael Forster (1907-2002): An Inner Landscape* (text by Jane Hamilton), Messum's, London, 2007, p. 77.

Spencer Frederick Gore NEAC LG, 1878–1914

15 House in a Park, 1907

oil on canvas 49 x 59 cms 19¼ x 23¼ ins signed and dated lower right



Exhibited
London, Leicester Galleries, New Year Exhibition, 1954, no. 114.

Spencer Gore painted this county house view in the summer of 1907, during a trip to Brandsby in Yorkshire, where he shared a cottage with Mr and Mrs Walter Russell and Albert Rothenstein. It is typical of his landscapes of the time, when he was experimenting extensively with the divisionist brushwork he had picked up from Lucien Pissarro, and shifting towards a brighter, purer, palette. As Wendy Baron noted in her book on the Camden Town Group: "[Gore] began to build up his paintings constructively, using separate small touches of one colour at a time throughout his canvas. His colours were often brilliant; oranges, violets and greens are scattered in an ordered harmony that nonetheless retains a lively, even spontaneous, flavour."¹

Gore's untimely death in 1914 cut short a stellar career in which he achieved the Presidency of the Camden Town Group of painters, membership of the NEAC, and a founding membership in the London Group. His friendships with Pissarro, Walter Sickert, Harold Gilman and Percy Wyndham Lewis placed him at the forefront of the emerging modern movement in British painting. Sickert in fact, contributed the foreword for the catalogue accompanying Gore's 1916 memorial exhibition at the Carfax Galleries, in which he wrote: "*His paint was not verbose. It was the mot juste in the right place. He attained to exquisiteness in touch. Expression descended like snowflakes on his canvas, varied, exquisite and economical.*"

¹ W. Baron, *The Camden Town Group*, London: Scolar Press, 1979, p. 150.

Duncan Grant LG, 1885–1978

16 Autumn Flowers, 1943

oil on canvas
61 x 46 cms 24 x 18 1/8 ins
signed and dated lower right; and signed verso

Provenance:
Paul Roche, and by descent.

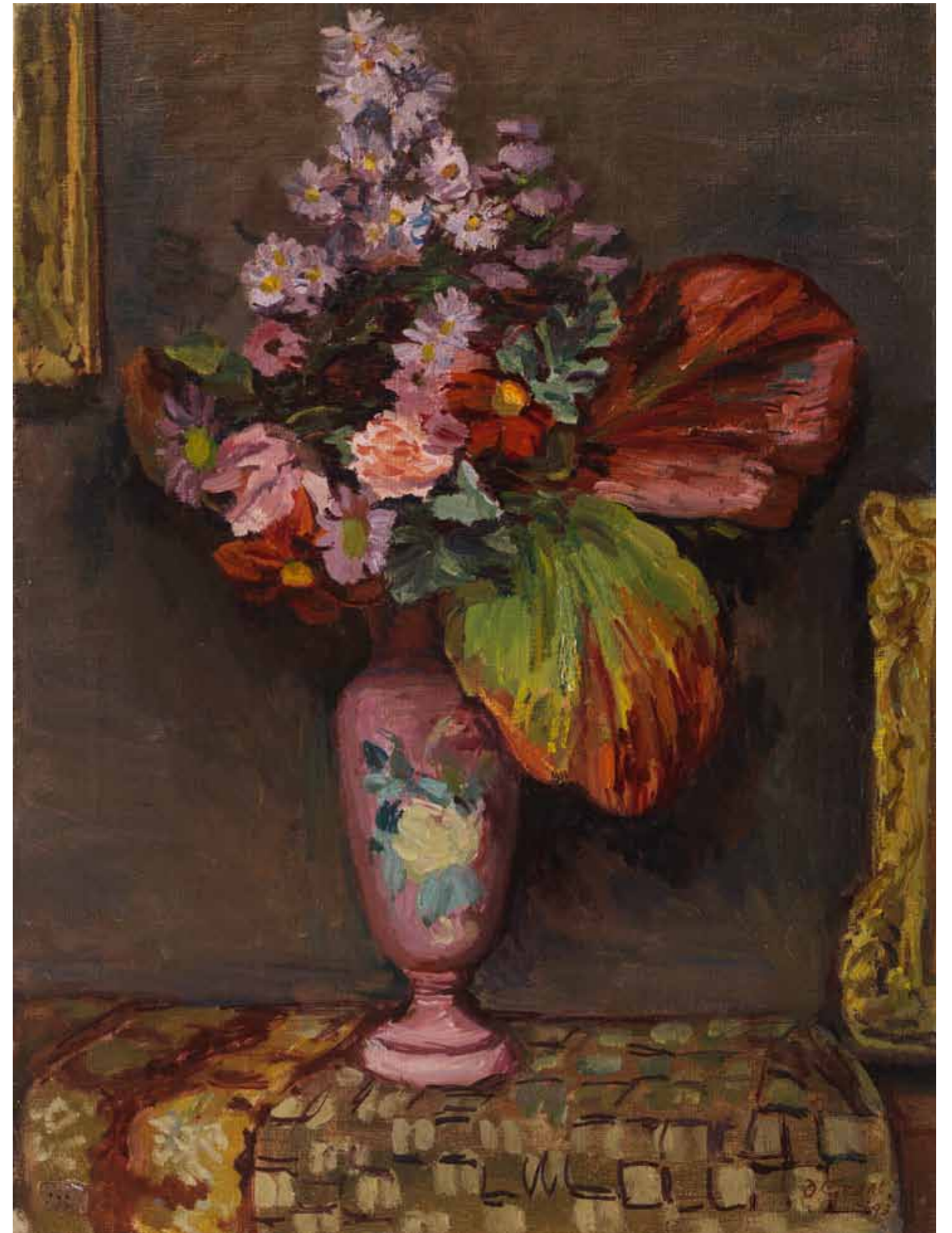
Duncan Grant painted this richly toned arrangement of asters, dahlias and berengia in 1943, when he was resident at Charleston, the farmhouse near Fittlehampton in East Sussex where previously, he had lived with his creative partner and former lover, Vanessa Bell.

In the autumn of 1939, shortly after Britain declared war on Germany, Grant vacated his Fitzroy Street studio and returned to Charleston. The following year, his studio was bombed and totally destroyed. Grant had first lived at Charleston more than twenty years earlier, along with Bell and his (then) lover, Duncan Garnett. Throughout the 1920s, the trio lived at Charleston with Bell's children, and intermittently, with various members of the Bloomsbury Group.

Inspired by Italian fresco painting and the French Post-impressionists, Grant and Bell decorated the interior of the house in what would come to be

known as their distinctive 'Bloomsbury' style. They also carefully planned studio spaces and Grant designed and replanted the gardens. Charleston became the social and creative nexus of the Bloomsbury Group, and was often said to have a atmosphere that provided a veritable forcing house for creativity.

Grant remained at Charleston for the duration of the war, working briefly in Plymouth as an official War Artist in 1940. In 1941, he also completed a series of murals for Berwick Church with Bell and her son Quentin. During these war years at Charleston, he painted several still lifes that were based on objects scattered throughout the house. Richard Shone has pointed out that the Victorian glass vase in the present work was known to have been at Charleston at that time.



Peter Greenham RA NEAC, 1909–1992

17 Beach Scene in Summer

oil on board
25 x 31 cms 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins

18 Cold Day at Mundesley

oil on linen laid to board 30.5 x 36 cms 12 x 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ ins
signed with initials lower right

Provenance: Private collection, London.
Exhibited: London, New Grafton Gallery, April 1979, no. 25.

19 Beach Scene with Bathers

oil on board
19 x 31.5 cms 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ ins



17



18



19

20 Summer Landscape

oil on canvas
45.5 x 60 cms 17 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ ins



Throughout the 1970s, Peter Greenham painted subtle, yet highly atmospheric seascapes and beach scenes around the Norfolk coast. Combining his acute draughtsmanship with sensitive brushwork and luminous colour keys, these later works have a depth and spontaneity comparable to his insightful portraiture.

While he usually worked from pre-prepared canvases, Greenham would prepare panel supports himself, often mixing raw umber or terre verte into his gesso grounds. But before loading up his brush, he took great pains in reconciling his composition through several drawings. However, while he might need ten or more sittings to complete a portrait, Greenham could often complete a landscape in a single session.¹

He was also fascinated by colour and tonal relationships, and the way in which paint surfaces could affect visual perception. By painting his beach scenes in pastel colours, using a narrow tonal range and fluid brushwork, he achieved harmonious contrasts between the deepening sea, the distant horizon, and

the more immediate energy of the beachcombers, while sacrificing nothing of the actual atmosphere of an English beach in early spring.

Greenham enjoyed painting beach scenes both at home and abroad and when asked whether he consciously approached them in differing ways, replied:

*"Pictures painted in France have more blue, less yellow. The French are said to have a saying that English painters have 'yellow in the eye'. You can paint in France without any yellow and the contours are more assured. Many a traveller coming to London from Dover after leaving France is dismayed by a landscape which does indeed seem grey, ragged and inconclusive: a scenery beautifully suited to literature, but much less to painting. Everything is mysterious, suggestive: what counts is recession, one tone behind another, like the flats in a theatre; incompleteness, given a stop here and there by strong incidents."*²

¹ See Norwich School of Art Gallery, *Peter Greenham*, touring exhibition, exhib. cat., pp. 8-9.

² Norwich, *op. cit.* p. 9.

Donald Hamilton Fraser RA, b. 1929

21 Still Life of Flowers Against Orange Background
oil on paper laid on card 38 x 28 cms 15 x 11 ins signed with initials lower right



Donald Hamilton Fraser was one of the most successful and well-regarded young modernist painters of the immediate postwar generation. The bold handling and vibrant palettes he employed in his semi-abstract still lifes and landscapes marked him out as possibly Britain's most promising exponent of the School of Paris style.

In the 1950s, he showed his work at Gimpel Fils, who was instrumental in bringing him to international attention. Further solo shows quickly followed in New York and Paris, as well as significant international group exhibitions, both in Britain and abroad. In 1958, he was invited by Carel Weight to teach part-time at the Royal College of Art, an appointment he enjoyed for the next 25 years. He was elected an Honorary Fellow of the College in 1984, and made RA in 1985.

Hamilton Fraser's first job was actually as a trainee journalist for Kemsley Newspapers and initially, he approached painting strictly as a hobby. It was not until 1949, when he completed his National Service that he decided to pursue it more seriously and enrolled in Saint Martin's School of Art. His

classmates included Frank Auerbach, Jo Tilson, Sheila Fell and Jack Smith, and Fraser thrived as a student, exhibiting his work almost immediately in the Young Contemporaries' shows. By 1952, when he left Saint Martin's, he was already selling his work and had come to the notice of critics. The following year he won a French government scholarship to study for a year in Paris. His exposure there to the work of Matisse, Braque and de Staël had a profound influence on his work.

He evolved his essentially expressionistic, brilliantly coloured style – one that endured well into his later career – by synthesising parts of de Staël's *Tachisme* with his own British instinct for the figurative aspects of landscape and still life. One of his more eccentric, but effective working practices was to use an old telephone directory as a palette. He would mix each of his colours on a page, tearing the paint-laden pages out, before moving on to the next colour. Not only did this keep each strong pigment separate, but the paper served to absorb much of the surplus oil paint.

Roger Hilton, 1911–1975

22 Cat, c. 1967
oil and chalk on floorboard 36 x 131 cms 14 1/8 x 51 3/8 ins



Exhibited:
Manchester, Peterloo Gallery, *Inaugural Exhibition*, November 1967.

Literature:
M. G. McNay, 'Opening Exhibition at the Peterloo Gallery, Manchester', in *The Guardian*, 4 November 1967.

In 1961, Roger Hilton won the prestigious John Moores Painting Prize, but his antagonistic behavior at the awards dinner only added weight to the rumours that, for all his evident talent, he was an erratic and difficult personality. So some years later, when *Cat* was included in the inaugural exhibition of the Peterloo Gallery in Manchester, his notoriety possibly garnered his work even more attention. Certainly, the local press took note. In reviewing the show for the Manchester Guardian, McNay singled out Hilton, writing: '... in short, [he] displays a nice contempt for orthodoxy. The central image of a well-ordered abstract painting on a rough plank of wood is a schematic caricatured black cat: unquestionably kin (sic) to Eliot's railway cat. But the buffoonery masks an acute mastery of the medium, a lyrical exactness of great poignancy in paintings...'¹

The 'rough plank of wood' mentioned by McNay was in fact a floorboard. Around 1965, Hilton painted a number of works on floorboards, which apparently came from his new home at Botallack.² When Roger and Rose Hilton first moved into the house, there were 'coffin drops' in the upstairs bedrooms, because the stairs were too narrow to allow the passage of a coffin. These were apertures in the floor, covered over with short removable

planks, so that a coffin could be raised into or lowered directly out of a bedroom into the living area below. The Hiltons put in new floors and had a new, wider staircase built, but Roger kept the old floorboards to use.

This disregard for conventional art materials was entirely in line with Hilton's broader philosophy towards his work. In a letter to Peter Townsend in 1973 he wrote: 'Throughout my life I have always maintained that you do not need complicated and expensive apparatus to produce a work of art. You could go in the backyard and scrape up some mud and put it on some board that the builders had left behind; art, by and large, is in the mind.'³

We are grateful to Andrew Lambirth and Rose Hilton for their help in the preparation of this entry.

¹ McKay is referring to T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, and went on to quote, by example: 'You can play no pranks with Skimbleshanks, He's a cat that cannot be ignored.'
² See Andrew Lambirth, *Roger Hilton: The Figured Language of Thought*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2007, p. 258.
³ Published in *Roger Hilton: Paintings and Drawings 1931-1973*, London: Serpentine Gallery and the Arts Council, 1974.

Rose Hilton, b. 1931

23 Interior at Botallack Moor

oil on canvas 102 x 76 cms 40 1/8 x 29 7/8 ins signed and inscribed with title verso



One of Rose Hilton's finest early canvases, *Interior, Beckenham Art School* (1950) still hangs in her house and remains a key reference for her work. It is a simple interior still life that Hilton composed in one of the school's workrooms and as Hilton related to her biographer Andrew Lambirth:

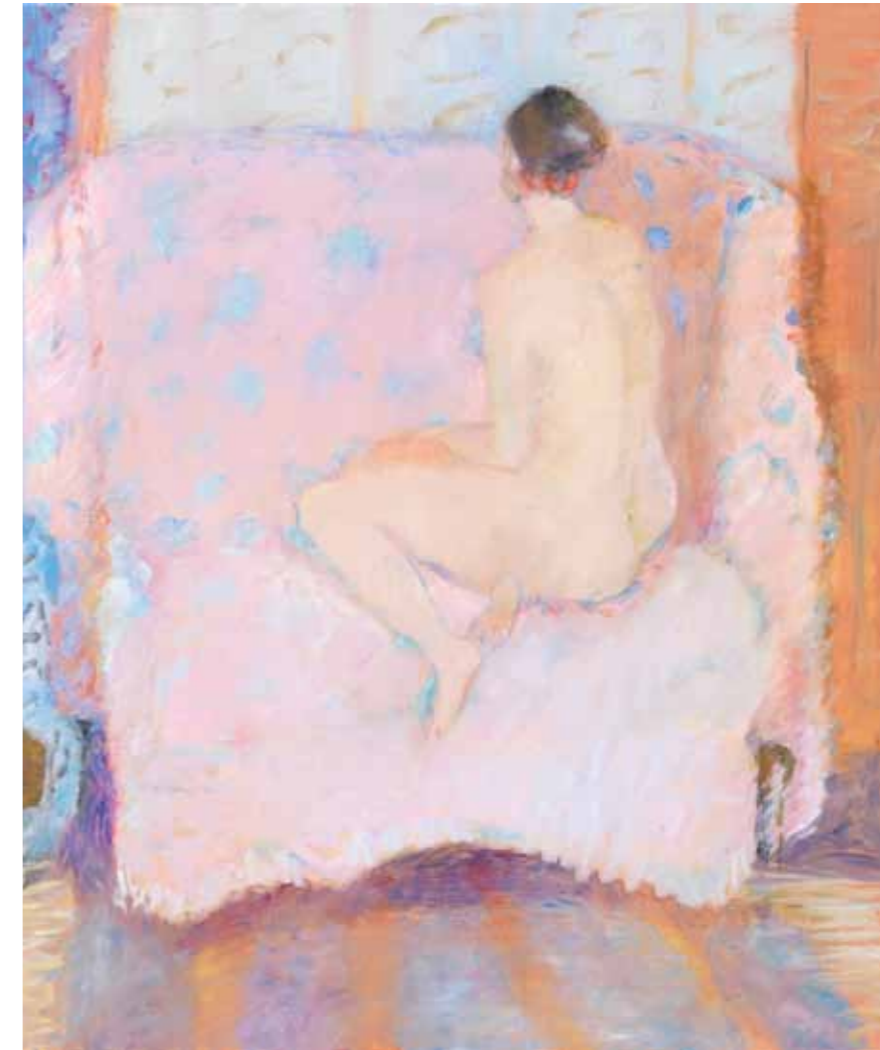
*'I could have attempted an academic painting ... instead my feeling for objects in space predominated. This must have been instinctive, as I had not seen many other pictures that could have influenced me. The use of thin paint to divide the painting, and the tilt of the screen to give tension within the work, make this a key painting in my development.'*¹

The present work was painted at least fifteen years later, when Hilton had moved with her husband Roger Hilton and their children to Botallack Moor, St. Just. For the next ten years, she painted only occasionally, devoting the lion's share of her time to supporting Roger and raising their two sons. Despite these demands, a creative atmosphere prevailed at Botallack and Rose made several studies after the old and modern masters. Her love of colour and pattern drew her towards the work of the later French post-Impressionists, particularly Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard, and Maurice Denis.

¹ A. Lambirth, *Rose Hilton: Something to Keep the Balance*, Farnham: Lund Humphries, and Messum's, 2009, p. 18.

24 Karen on a Pink Settle

oil on canvas 60.5 x 51 cms 23 7/8 x 20 1/8 ins



Although she developed into a very different artist, Rose Hilton always recognised the influence her husband Roger Hilton had on her own development as a painter, particularly in terms of colour. "They didn't teach us much about technique at the Royal College of Art," she explained.

"I didn't really know how to progress in the development of using colour. So from Roger I got that, just by listening and observing. When he died and I had much more time, I'd made notes of things he'd said and could now apply them; and there was nothing to stop me painting."

Ivon Hitchens LG, 1893–1979

25 White Sea Cloud, 1967

oil on canvas
50.8 x 61 cms 20 x 24 ins
signed lower left

Provenance:
with Waddington Galleries;
Private collection, United Kingdom.

Exhibited:
London, Waddington Galleries, *Ivon Hitchens; Figure Theme*, 1968, no. 23.

Ivon Hitchens' landscapes and seascapes are immediately recognisable by his deft brushwork and daring use of colour to evoke, rather than reproduce, a specific place. He is widely regarded as England's outstanding and most idiosyncratic proponent of the landscape tradition in twentieth century art.

In 1965, when he was at the height of his powers, Hitchens stayed in a house lent to him and his wife by friends on East Beach, Selsey. One morning, while walking along the shore, they came upon a house backing onto the beach, which was for sale. Within an hour of being shown around the property

by its owners their offer was accepted!¹ Though only a seaside bungalow, the views across the bay towards Pagham Harbour were spectacular; great open expanses of sea and sky that were a great contrast to the enclosed setting of their woodland home, Greenleaves. The beach house provided the stimulus Hitchens was seeking at the time to explore the use of colour for its own sake and signaled the start of an exciting new period in his work, to which the present painting belongs.

¹ See Peter Khoroch, *Ivon Hitchens*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1990, p. 103.



John Hoyland RA, 1934–2011

26 Abstract Composition, c. 1958
oil on canvas 50.8 x 61 cms 20 x 24 ins



Provenance:
Purchased directly from the Artist in 1960 by a contemporary at the Royal Academy Schools.

This is a rare early work dating from John Hoyland's time at the RA Schools between 1956 and 1960. During his first two years at Sheffield School of Arts and Crafts, he continued to paint local landscapes in an abstract figurative style influenced by Nicolas de Stäel. He also enthusiastically experimented with abstract expressionism throughout the 1950s, particularly in 1957, after taking classes with Victor Pasmore.

However, around 1956, influenced at least in part by his exposure to William Turnbull, Hoyland's work became entirely abstract. He began to replace meticulous geometry and hard-edged forms with softer, irregular blocks of colour, set against brilliant backgrounds and delineated by somewhat complementary borders. Later in his career, Hoyland explained that an instinctive, spontaneous approach was essential to his work, stating: "... colours tend to choose you. They come to your like feelings."¹

Upon leaving the RA in 1960, Hoyland exhibited his work in the *New London Situation* show at the influential Marlborough New London Gallery (today Marlborough Fine Art). *Situation* was a group exhibition organized by the Royal Society of British Artists as a concerted reply to the American abstract expressionist shows mounted by the Tate in 1956 and 1960. The show featured several huge abstract canvases, and throughout the 1960s, Hoyland painted on a similarly massive scale, developing a style somewhat similar to that of Bridget Riley, his colleague at Hornsey College of Art. Hoyland eventually became known as the finest of the so-called 'Situation' painters, as his work moved increasingly towards a kind of action-painter, colour-field style in which he alternately brushed, dripped and even splashed paint onto enormous canvases.

¹ See Mel Gooding, *John Hoyland*, London, 2006, p. 17 and p. 23.

Albert Irvin RA, b.1922

27 Albany, 1982
gouache 55.9 x 78.7 cms 22 x 31 ins signed and dated upper left



Exhibited:
Edinburgh, Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour, n.d.

Between 1940 and 1941, Albert Irvin studied at Northampton School of Art, before joining the RAF where he served as a navigator during World War II. After the war, he studied at Goldsmiths College and and later in 1962 returned there to teach until 1983.

Irvin explored impressionistic and 'Kitchen Sink' styles and subject matter before shifting almost entirely to abstract expressionism around the early 1960s. By the late 1960s, his work focused more on communicating the painting process as a theme in its own right. His first solo exhibition was held in 1960 at 57 Gallery, London. Thirty years later the Serpentine Gallery housed a major retrospective exhibition. More recently Irvin's vibrant, gestural paintings were included in *Seeing in Colours* a group exhibition organized by the British Council in 2010, which travelled to venues

throughout Armenia, Georgia, The Ukraine and Azerbaijan and included works by Sir Howard Hodgkin, John Hoyland, Bridget Riley, and Alan Davie.

Tate curator and author of the monograph on the artist, Paul Moorhouse wrote of Irvin's work:

*'... even to those familiar with his work, seeing a new painting by Irvin can be an extraordinary experience akin to discovering a young, energetic artist in the first flush of ambition. Given the force of its restless energy, its freshness and the sense it communicates of an artist in love with his chosen activity, it is even more surprising to realise that this is the work of an artist in his late seventies.'*¹

¹ P. Moorhouse, *Albert Irvin: Life to Painting*, London: Lund Humphries, 1998.

Geoffrey Key, b.1941

28 Piccadilly, Manchester, 1965

oil on board 91.4 x 121.9 cms 36 x 48 ins signed and dated lower right



According to Geoffrey Key, he painted this view of Manchester's Piccadilly in his studio, based on sketches made from the window of Woolworth's upstairs café. The store is no longer there and the view is very different today.

At this early stage in his career, Key was often referred to as a close successor to L. S. Lowry, and indeed the present work is strongly Lowryesque in its palette and treatment of cityscape. This restrained tone in Key's early works comes out of his training in Manchester with Harry Rutherford, who was himself a pupil of Sickert.

However, throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, Key experimented with a variety of styles and influences, from the abstraction of Ben Nicholson to works by Victor Pasmore, Paul Nash and Keith Vaughan. Without ever succumbing to pure imitation, Key sifted from these artists' styles what aspects he particularly admired, and then, through his own work, examined these stylistic traits. Clearly, in his later work, he was similarly motivated in his endlessly energetic riffs on the work of Picasso, Braque and the School of Paris.

Interestingly, Key appears to have returned to similar cityscapes only later: in the 1980s (Amsterdam); and the 1990s (Hong Kong), albeit, using what appear to be more site-specific palettes.

Peter Kinley, 1929–1988

29 Study for Figure, c. 1960

oil on paper laid on card 28 x 20.3 cms 11 x 8 ins



Provenance:
With Gimpel Fils, London, where purchased;
Private collection, United Kingdom.

Peter Kinley was born in Vienna and immigrated to England in 1938. He served in the Army between 1944 and 1948. He then went to Germany and studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, followed by St Martin's School of Art. In 1953 Kinley visited Nicolas de Staël's exhibition at Gimpel Fils and was so impressed that he began to develop a similarly reductive palette knife style and approach to abstract form. In his later work he adopted a more thinly painted, outlined colour field style, and a plasticity of form akin to that of Matisse.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, Kinley concentrated on painting single figure compositions, often posing his heavily abstracted totem-like figures in

closely cropped, anonymous interiors. When he was asked around this time to describe abstraction in his work, he wrote:

*'I do aim to find recognisable images in my painting; this does not imply a return to 'Realism' or 'Naturalism' in the 19th century sense, but of translating experience (largely but not exclusively of a visual kind) into paint... I begin with a clear idea of what I intend to paint, but in trying to realize this idea in paint it may be necessary to change the image quite a lot.'*¹

¹ M. Livingstone and C. Kinley, *Peter Kinley*, Lund Humphries, 2010, p. 10.

Eardley Knollys, 1902–1991

30 Graham Sutherland's Garden, Menton
oil on canvas 45.7 x 61 cms 18 x 24 ins signed with initials lower left



Encouraged by Francis Bacon, in April of 1947, Eardley Knollys travelled with Graham Sutherland and his wife Katherine to the French Riviera. Sutherland, who has been immediately captivated by the area, a few years later purchased Eileen Gray's *Tempe à Pailla*, a compact 1930s modernist villa, that commanded breath-taking sea views. The Sutherlands renamed the house *La Villa Blanche* and planted its 36 acres with a jungle of olive, mandarin and avocado trees, datura lilies and mimosa.

Knollys became a frequent visitor to *La Villa Blanche*, although he most likely did not paint the present view before 1960, as he did not take up painting in earnest until after his retirement (*i.e.*, when he was well into his 50s). However, throughout (and beyond) his career as an art dealer, Knollys amassed a remarkable collection of modern masters, including several works by Sutherland, Duncan Grant, Ivon Hitchens, Henri Gaudier Brzeska, Amedeo Modigliani, Winifred Nicholson, Lucien Pissarro, and Matthew Smith. This collection was augmented in 1965, when he inherited his friend

Eddy Sackville-West's collection. For twenty years Knollys and Sackville-West had spent weekends at *Crichel House* in Dorset, which they shared with the critics Raymond Mortimer and Desmond Shawe-Taylor, effectively forming a salon.

After 1965, Knollys moved to a new weekend retreat in Hampshire, which he shared with the Bulgarian picture framer Mattei Radev. When Knollys died in 1991, Radev sold the house and moved the collection to London, where it effectively covered the walls. While he was alive, Knollys had encouraged Radev to sell one of the pictures, Modigliani's *Portrait de Lagar* (1915), at auction in London. The work fetched a respectable price, but was subsequently reoffered in New York, where it fetched significantly more. After this, Radev resolved not to sell any more of the works. Instead, he preserved the collection in its entirety, and last year, it was exhibited for the first time at Pallant House, Chichester in the exhibition, *The Radev Collection: Bloomsbury and Beyond*.

Edward Le Bas RA, 1904–1966

31 The Palace Pier, Brighton, 1949
oil on board 48.3 x 68.6 cms 19 x 27 ins signed lower right; and signed and numbered verso



Provenance:
with Leicester Galleries, London.
with Hammer Galleries, New York.

The Palace Pier was one of Edward Le Bas's favourite subjects, although few examples have become available to the market. Brighton's famous pier doubtless appealed to Le Bas's fascination with colour and form. However, his focus on human energy and activity in the present scene is unusual. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, he painted several café society interiors, using a style that combined Bonnard's attention to surface pattern with

the sensitive social observation of a Degas. But in his cityscapes, including Brighton, Le Bas tended to keep staffage to a minimum, and largely static. Here, however, he used an interplay of colour and diagonals to add immediacy and atmosphere to his scene, for example the correspondence of the child's yellow hair at lower left and the gilded finials on the Pier.

John Minton, 1917–1957

32 The Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, 1939

oil on canvas 46.2 x 55 cms 18¼ x 21½ ins inscribed with title and date verso



Provenance:

Given by the Artist to Nancy Haig, by whom bequeathed to the current owner.

Before WWII, Patrick Millard encouraged his students to travel independently to Paris. Between 1938 and 1939, John Minton, Michael Ayrton, Nancy Haig and Jane Levenson all followed his advice, and, apart from Ayrton, all took flats on the Île St Louis.

As Minton explored the city, he became particularly fascinated with the Parisian public gardens, possibly because their formality, clarity of design and inclusion of classical statuary appealed to his instincts as an illustrator.

John Minton, 1917–1957

33 Landscape

oil on canvas 51.5 x 77 cms 20¼ x 30¾ ins signed indistinctly upper left



Provenance:

Estate of Nancy Haig.

This landscape dates from John Minton's student days at St John's Wood Art School, where he trained before WWII under the inspired tutelage of Patrick Millard. This gestural, atmospheric view of farmhouses nestled amidst rolling hills, reminiscent of works by Samuel Palmer, is consistent with the neo-romantic approach to landscape painting that Millard espoused.

Millard would often take his students on drawing trips to his native Lakeland fells and one of Minton's classmates was Nancy Haig, who owed the work.

We are grateful to Dr. Frances Spalding for authenticating this work, and confirming that it dates from Minton's student period at St John's Wood.

John Miller, 1931–2002

34 Passing the Terrace on the Tide

oil on canvas 75.5 x 70.5 cms 29¼ x 27¾ ins signed and inscribed with title verso



During the 1970s, John Miller emerged as a cultural icon in Cornwall, famous for his idyllic scenes of the west Penwith peninsula, and Tresco in the Scilly Isles. In addition to being a popular painter, he was also known as an art teacher, a television personality, a patron of local charities, and a supporter of important architectural projects including an interior redesign of the Newlyn Art Gallery.

Since the 1990s, Miller's simply composed, yet graphically striking, predominantly blue and white studies of sea and sky have become equally iconic. The light-soaked, joyous nature of his Cornish views is now so closely identified with him as to be almost a recognised trademark of both his artistic style and personality. His work is now included in several important public and corporate collections including Penlee House Gallery and Museum, Cornwall County Council, Truro Cathedral, the Groucho Club, Sony Europe, John Lewis Partnership, London Transport Museum, and the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Sir Cedric Morris LG, 1889–1982

35 Estuary with Tern, 1929

oil on canvas 64 x 76.8 cms 25¼ x 30¼ ins signed and dated lower right



Provenance:
with Blond Fine Art, London.

In 1929, after periods working in London, Cornwall and Paris, Cedric Morris and Arthur Lett-Haines moved to Higham in Suffolk, where they took the lease on Pound Farm. This move marked the beginning of Morris's distancing of his life and work from the London art scene.

Over the next two years, Morris and Lett-Haines transformed The Pound, with its long, low, very old house and overgrown gardens, into a paradise retreat for artists. They became noted for their raucously creative parties at the farm, where guests included Frances Hodgkins, Barbara Hepworth, and John Skeaping. They also kept a variety of birds including a pet peacock named Ptolemy. Morris's knowledge of and affinity for birds, indeed, for animals in general, no doubt fed what was apparently an innate ability to paint, what one reviewer of his very successful 1928 show at Tooth, deemed: '... *living, breathing, flying birds, not coloured reproductions of stuffed carcasses!*'

Interestingly, Morris's bird studies are often compared with those of John James Audubon, who actually did work from taxidermies. However, as

Richard Morphet noted: '[the] *unusual force of Cedric's paintings derives from the projection of the subject through a dynamic economy in combination with an acute sense of pictorial realism.*'² Morphet also suggested that it was actually by combining formal compositions with stylized surface textures that Morris lifted his bird subjects out of the emblematic to instead 'provoke a lively sympathy with [their] mood... which ornithological exactitude may tend to destroy.'³ In this respect, Morris's birds more closely follow in the British tradition of Francis Barlow and James Ward, and the Dutch synthesis between science and style that reached its peak in the work of Aert Schouman.

Similar bird studies include *Sparrowhawks* (1929, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea); and *Greenland Falcon* (1928, Ulster Museum, Belfast).

1 R. Morphet, *Cedric Morris*, exhib. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 1984, p. 32.

2 Morphet, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

3 *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

Sir Cedric Morris LG, 1889–1982

36 Garden Produce, 1963

oil on canvas
92 x 71.5 cms 36¼ x 28⅞ ins
signed and dated; extensively inscribed on various labels verso

Provenance:

Mrs B. Langstar, purchased directly from the Artist in 1970.

Exhibited:

Cardiff, National Museum of Wales, *Cedric Morris Retrospective Exhibition*, 1968, no. 95.

Ipswich, The Ixion Society, details untraced.

London, De Vere Society, lent by the Artist.

London, Upper Grosvenor Galleries, *Cedric Morris: Paintings*, 1970, no. 19, when lent by Mrs Langstar.

In his many portraits, landscapes, and nature studies, Cedric Morris consistently displayed a distinctive, highly decorative post-impressionistic style, often termed naïve. However, as Richard Shone noted in 1984, following the artist's major retrospective exhibition at the Tate, Morris's so-called primitivism was only one aspect of his work. He deliberately evolved his bold colourism and simplified forms to amplify the psychological potential of his subject matter, not only in his portraiture – his most notable subjects being Barbara Hepworth (1931, exhib. Tate); David and Barbara Carr (1940, Tate); and Lucian Freud (1940, Cardiff) – but also in his landscapes and still lifes.¹

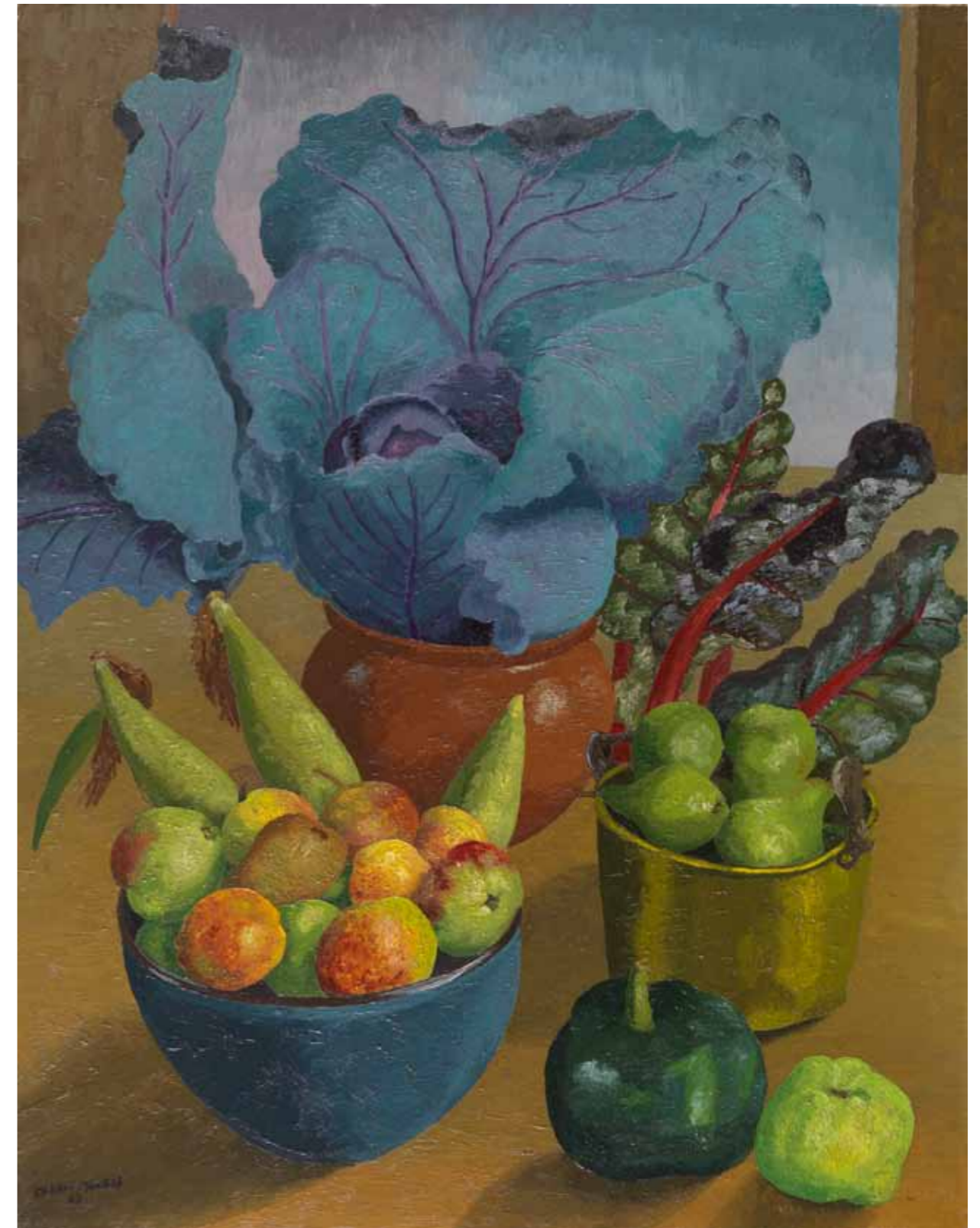
On the recommendation of Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Morris was invited to join the Seven and Five, although he resigned only years later, possibly in opposition to the group's increasing shift towards abstraction. During the 1930s, he also enjoyed notable success as a commercial artist, designing posters for Shell Oil and British Petroleum, and collaborating with Paul Nash on textile designs for Cresta Silks. Revered as an educator, along with Arthur Lett-Haines he founded the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing, where his students included Maggie Hambling and Lucien Freud. Additionally, he was a passionate horticulturalist and conservationist, who even developed new cultivars of fruits, vegetables and irises.

In 1940, he and Lett-Haines moved the East Anglian School to Benton End in Hadleigh, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Morris painted several still lifes of his homegrown produce, such as the present arrangement of cabbage, chard, pears, apples, and a pepper. Another very similar vegetable subject dated 1963 was included in the Tate retrospective (no. 99), and in general, it is worth noting that both Morris's portraiture and floral still lifes are stylistically similar to examples by Moïse Kisling, whose work Morris knew.

Most of these produce still lifes appear to be straightforward celebrations of sensual form and colour. But at the end of WWII, when the gardens at Benton End were almost completely given over to growing food for the war effort, Morris painted *Yalta*, a vegetable study he maintained was deliberately painted as an allegory: '*The big red pimento is Stalin, the big green ones are Roosevelt and Churchill, and the carrots...*'²

1 R. Shone, 'Twentieth-Century Art: Some Touring Retrospectives', in *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 126, no. 980 (November 1984), p. 719.

2 Morphet, op. cit., no. 84, p. 117.



John Northcote Nash CBE RA, 1893–1977

37 The Woodpile

oil on board
49.5 x 61 cms 19½ x 24 ins
signed lower left



Provenance:
with Magdalene Street Gallery, Cambridge, c. 1970;
Private collection, United Kingdom, by 1970.

Throughout the 1930s, John Nash frequently took painting trips to East Anglia and Essex before finally settling at Bottengoms Farmhouse, near Wormingford in 1943. Although he taught at the Royal College of Art, and later became a Royal Academician, Nash was uninterested in the politics of the London art establishment, and therefore found a creative sanctuary in the Stour Valley, as a landscape painter, a genre deemed somewhat retrograde at the time. Unlike Walter Sickert, who declared the region

'sucked dry' by the talents of Gainsborough and Constable, Nash looked at the surrounding villages and fields with fresh and inspired eyes and saw nothing but possibilities for expression.

Along with Sir Cedric Morris, his friend and neighbor in East Anglia, he founded the Colchester Art Society, eventually becoming its Chairman and President.

Mary Newcomb, 1922–2008

38 Horse and Trap Run and Rest, 1979
oil on board 71 x 76 cms 28 x 29½ ins



Almost all of Newcomb's work revolved around rural themes: farm life and livestock, the rhythm of the seasons, village fêtes, and anecdotal glimpses of local life. In this her almost bird's-eye view of traps, rigs, and what appears to be a baby's pram, all parked haphazardly in a village square, she arranged the strong colours of the forms against a simple light background, almost like dance steps.

For all of Newcomb's empirical training and command of direct observation, perspective and proportion always appear to take on a life of their own in her compositions. As Ian Collins has noted, Newcomb's approach to composition, perhaps not always consciously, expressed both an interconnectedness between humanity and nature, as well as the very strangeness, not to mention, comedy of human existence.

39 Self Portrait in a Dream, Sept '56
oil on board 80 x 52 cms 31½ x 20½ ins signed and dated



Mary Newcomb (nee Slatford) was born at Harrow-on-the-Hill, but grew up in Wiltshire, where she developed a lifelong passion for the English countryside. After taking her degree in general sciences at Reading University, she taught maths and science at a comprehensive in Bath.

In fact, Newcomb's love of the natural sciences is key to understanding the development of her distinctive style. During her final year at Reading, she volunteered at the Flatford Mill Field Studies Centre set up on the Sussex-Essex border by the bird painter, Eric Ennion. It was an on-site post, so she lodged at a local cottage, where she took copious notes and sketches and developed her talent for direct observation. It was also on a trip to Walberswick that Ennion arranged, where she met her husband, Godfrey Newcomb. After their marriage they lived on small farms in the Waveney valley.

Newcomb took evening classes at Corsham Court, and she and Godfrey began to make and sell decorative medieval-styled slipware. After a few years, Godfrey took over running the farm and pottery, and Newcomb could turn her attention to painting. She sold her first works for next to nothing at the Norwich Twenty Group before approaching London dealer Andras Kalman. Newcomb had at least a dozen solo exhibitions at Crane Kalman from 1970 onwards, as well as other shows on the continent and the United States. Acclaimed by fellow artists from Ben Nicholson to Mary Fedden, she was also admired by numerous writers, including J.G. Farrell, and especially, Ronald Blythe, the East Anglian writer often cited as a latter-day Thomas Hardy. They became friends and collaborators, with Newcomb producing illustrations for editions of one of Blythe's novels and a book of his essays.

Mary Newcomb, 1922–2008

40 Sheep's Face

pencil 14.5 x 21 cms 5¾ x 8¼ ins signed with initials
Provenance: Lena Boyle.



41 Woman and Orchard, 1960

oil on canvas board 61 x 85 cms 24 x 33½ ins signed and dated lower right



Mary Newcomb's work might initially appear naïve, but as Ian Collins has pointed out, her paintings and drawings show an affinity for English folk art, and an innate grasp of natural science. Strictly speaking, Newcomb's work fits into the neo-romantic tradition of William Blake and Samuel Palmer, but in her knack for discerning the lyrical in the rural, her work is also similar to that of contemporaries, such as Winifred Nicholson, Mary Potter and Elisabeth Vellacott.

Newcomb never undertook any real formal training. Instead, she worked spontaneously and almost entirely by intuition. And, although she often

claimed to be unable to draw, her energetic, tactile use of line in this delightfully direct study of a sheep's face contradicts this.

A poetic observer of rural life, Newcomb initially shaped her work on her own experiences as a farmer's wife. She lived with her husband, Geoffrey on the Norfolk-Suffolk border and by the banks of the River Waveney, where dog otters often fought beneath her window. For some years she also worked in a commercial orchard, and this early image of a shadowy female form amidst apple trees is actually a very rare self-portrait. In a handful of later "likenesses", as she termed them, Newcomb reduced herself to a mere shadow, calling to ducks from a doorway, or passing through a cornfield in a speeding train.

Glyn Warren Philpot RA, 1884–1937

42 Negro Walking (*Standing Nude Portrait of Henry Thomas*)

conceived in 1929 bronze with a black patina 85 cms 33¼ ins high numbered on the base, '8/8'

Provenance:

By descent from the artist.

Exhibited:

London, Royal Academy, 1929, no. 1511 (another cast).

London, Royal Academy, 1930, no. 1600 (another cast).

London, Leicester Galleries, 1932, no. 28 (another cast).

London, Tate Gallery, 1938 (another cast).

London, Leighton House, 1959, no. 70.

London, Royal Academy, *Bicentenary Exhibition*, 1968-9, no. 496.

London, National Portrait Gallery, *Glyn Philpot 1884 - 1937*, 1984-1985, no. 123.

London, Leighton House, *Glyn Philpot 1884-1937: The Bronzes*, 1986.

Chichester, Pallant House Gallery, on loan, 2006-2011.

Literature:

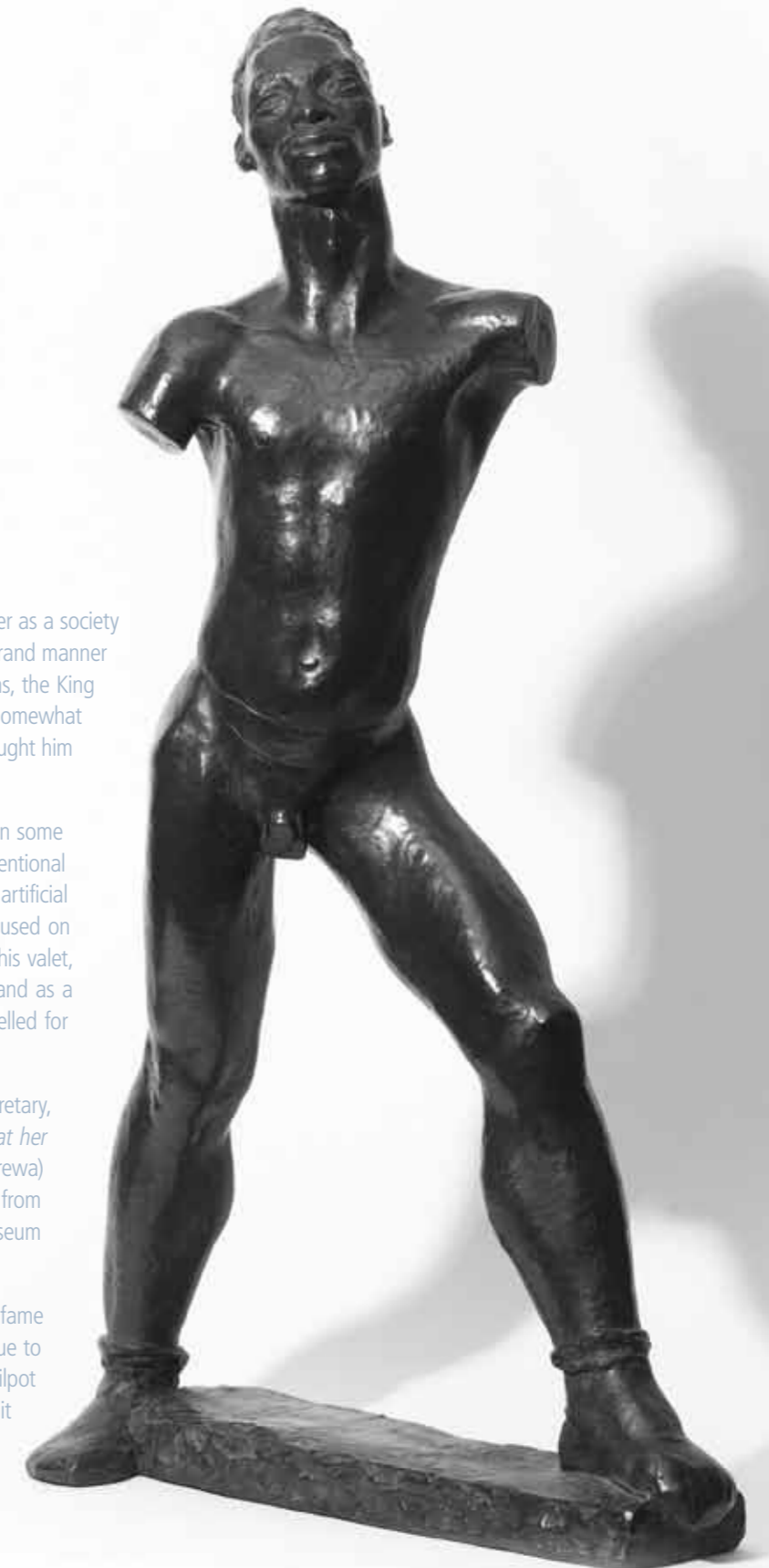
A. C. Sewter, *Glyn Philpot 1884-1937*, London, 1951, pl. 116.

By the late 1920s, when he conceived this work, Glyn Philpot's career as a society portraitist was at its peak. He first made his name painting in the grand manner style of Sargent, and his clients included society beauties, politicians, the King of Egypt, and Oswald Mosley. Later, he developed a simplified, somewhat flattened style, more in keeping with the modernist ideal, which brought him a whole new clientele.

Philpot was fascinated by African physiognomy, possibly because on some level, he saw African people as embodying the antithesis of conventional English society. Some of his depictions of Africans put them in an artificial Orientalist context, but most are portrait studies that evidently focused on conveying his subject's character. One of his favourite models was his valet, Henry Thomas, a young Jamaican man, who had travelled to England as a ship's stoker. He lived with Philpot for a number of years and modelled for many of his works.

This cast was possibly owned by Philpot's devoted sister Daisy, his secretary, housekeeper, and even, occasional model. When her portrait, *Girl at her Toilette* (c. 1908, Wellington, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa) was first exhibited, critics noted the subtle compositional borrowings from Sargent's notorious *Portrait of Madame X* (1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY).

The fact that Philpot never attained the same level of posthumous fame as, for example, his contemporary, Augustus John, may be partly due to the outbreak of WWII. But as Kenneth Garlick has also argued, Philpot never quite achieved his own sense of modernism. Instead, in pursuit of his own modern ideal, he experimented with various styles and trends. No sooner would he perfect a tonal, Whistlerian style, than he would abandon it in favor of a Neue Sachlichkeit decadent chic that he successfully incorporated into society portraits.



Edward Piper, 1938–1990

43 Silhouetted Nude before Window
oil on canvas 91 x 71 cms 35½ x 28 ins



The elder son of John and Myfanwy Piper, Edward Piper studied at Bath Academy of Art and the Slade School in London, where his tutors tried to dissuade him from developing a freeform, spontaneous approach to technique and execution. Nevertheless, he always insisted that he wanted his work to be “sweet and swift” and to show none of the sweat and graft that creative labour inevitably entailed.

Piper worked in graphic design and as a photographer for several Shell county guides, but his abiding interest was in the female nude. The female form seemed to afford his creative imagination almost endless possibilities and he incorporated various styles in his work, such as the Matisse inspired cut-out forms of the present composition.

In her monograph accompanying the artist’s retrospective in 2000 at Messum’s, Jenny Pery wrote:

‘His main interest was in girls, and for most of his life he made paintings of girls that were as celebratory as they were frankly sexual. The pictures are not portraits, although each model has her own individuality. The models that twist and display in a riot of flowers and patterned garments are studied not as objects of sexual arousal but with the same appreciation that an exotic flower might be studied... looking at a painting by Edward Piper is invariably cheering and invigorating’.

Mary Potter, 1900–1981

44 Essex Winter
oil on canvas 64 x 76 cms 25¼ x 29½ ins



Provenance:
The New Art Centre, London.

Exhibited:
London, Arthur Tooth & Sons, Ltd., 1946.

Mary Potter studied at the Slade with Henry Tonks and Philip Wilson Steer and was involved with the New English Art Club, the London Group and the Seven and Five. She embraced every genre, save portraiture, and her naive style, marked by subtle palettes and a contained emotional energy, was informed by everything from the work of Paul Klee, to children’s drawings, Eastern art and philosophy and even graffiti.

Between 1946 and 1951, she lived between London and Aldeburgh. During the winter however, she would often retreat from the icy tension of city life to stay with friends in Brighton and Essex, where she particularly enjoyed painting the surrounding winter landscapes. Another of Potter’s wintery Essex landscapes dated to around 1944 is in the collection of the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield.

Mary Potter, 1900–1981

45 White Chrysanthemums in an Urn
oil on canvas 61 x 76 cms 24 x 29 7/8 ins



Provenance:
Guy Dixon Collection.

Exhibited:
London, Arthur Tooth & Sons, Ltd.

Potter favoured pale tones and thinly layers of oil to achieve her ethereal, light-suffused forms. According to her son and biographer, Julian Potter:

'She rarely painted a direct light source, preferring it diffused or reflected back from a rough surface, or hovering, ghost-like, in shadow. She tended to mix white with her colours because she preferred them to be opaque and earthy. Her colours, too are offbeat, not natural.'

*'Greens but with lilacs, salmon with grey. The tonal closeness of these hues allow the warmer tints to glow, the cool to recede. In Potter's work the spatial play, the overlapping webs of colour, the surprising pure notes suddenly discovered, all create a sensation of vitality that is absorbing and astringent.'*¹

¹ See Julian Potter, *Mary Potter: A Life in Painting*, London: Scolar Press, 1998.

Peter Prendergast, 1946–2007

46 Towards the Mountain from Tan-y-Graig, 2003
oil on board
91 x 91 cms 35 7/8 x 35 7/8 ins



Before his sudden death at the age of 61, Peter Prendergast was widely regarded as the finest landscape painter in Wales, effectively the successor to Kyffin Williams in national identity, if not actual technique. He was born and brought up in Abertridwr, near Caerphilly, and throughout his entire career, the landscape of South Wales informed his work. While his brothers were accepted to the local grammar school, Prendergast failed the 11-plus and might have spent his life shifting coal, were it not for his art master at the local secondary modern, who urged him to take up painting. With this

encouragement and support, he earned a scholarship to Cardiff School of Art, and trained there until 1964, when he moved on to the Slade.

He trained with Frank Auerbach, who based his instruction on the direct visual approach he himself had learned from David Bomberg at the Borough Polytechnic. Prendergast developed an immediate, visceral, yet highly disciplined approach to painting that lent his work a tactile energy, regardless of his subject matter. Most of his paintings are landscapes, such as this boldly atmospheric, gestural view from the Gwynedd Peninsula,

Peter Prendergast, 1946–2007

47 Still Life – Spider Plant, 1996

oil on canvas 61 x 51 cms 24 x 20 1/8 ins signed and dated verso



Provenance:
(Possibly) Constantine Sterio;
with Antony Cosgrove.

near his home in North Wales. Prendergast's father was an Irish coal miner, and he always felt a keen connection between his father's work and his own painting process, even going so far as to equate them as forms of "digging". He said, "*The materials I use to make images—charcoal is burnt wood, paint is earth bound with oil, lead from the ground—are the same as my father was involved with in digging coal... I try to understand how the earth is constructed ... to search for the spirit of nature. My father was digging out coal to make profits for other people. But then coal keeps people's houses warm. Painting keeps people's souls warm*".¹

He also extended this expressionistic style to his still lifes, such as this study of a houseplant, painted in thickly laden, angular strokes with rich interplays of browns and greys to highlight the pure yellow-greens of the foliage. His strongly delineated colour-plays ground the nervous energy of the composition, and balance the inherently 'comfy' nature of a table-top still life with the spider plant's exotic appeal.

¹ Peter Prendergast, interviewed by Robert Armstrong in *Peter Prendergast: Paintings from Wales*, The National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, and Agnew's, 1993.

Dod Procter RA NEAC, 1891–1972

48 Young Girl, c. 1932

oil on canvas 36 x 28 cms 14 1/8 x 11 ins signed upper left



Provenance:
Private collection, Jersey, CI (?).
Bonham's-Langlois, Jersey, CI, October 1965, where sold (according to an inscription on the stretcher);
Private collection, United Kingdom.

Exhibited:
London, Leicester Galleries, May 1932, no. 5.
Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery; Penzance, Newlyn Art Gallery; Newcastle upon Tyne, Laing Art Gallery, *Dod Procter RA (1892-1972)*, 1990, no. 34.

Literature:
A. James, *A Singular Vision: Dod Procter 1890-1972*, Bristol: Sansom and Co. (with Penlee House Museum, Penzance), 2007, p. 93, illus.

Dod Procter developed her mature style during the 1920s, when she increasingly focused her energies on portraiture and single figure compositions, frequently female nudes. Her work took on a sensual volumetric quality and her stylization of the female form owes something to Renoir, whose work she admired and knew well from her time at the Atelier Colorossi. Procter's best-known painting from this period is undoubtedly *Morning* (1927, Tate Britain), which was a veritable *cause célèbre* at the Royal Academy exhibition that year. After the *Daily Mail* immediately

purchased the painting for the nation, Procter became effectively the most talked about living artist in Britain.

Six years later, Procter used the same model: Cissie Barnes, a Cornish fisherman's daughter, who was only sixteen when she had posed for *Morning*. Barnes also later posed for *Virginal* (1929, private collection), a full-size standing nude, inspired by the work of both Lucas Cranach and Pablo Picasso.

Ernest Procter ARA, 1886–1935

49 On the Beach at Newlyn, 1919

oil on canvas
71.1 x 92 cms 28 x 36¼ ins
signed and dated lower right

Exhibited:
Penzance, Penlee House Gallery & Museum, *A Cornish Childhood*, 2010.

Ernest Procter was born in Tynemouth, Northumberland, but lived most of his life in Newlyn, Cornwall, where he had studied around the turn of the century with Stanhope Forbes. He also trained in Paris at the Atelier Colarossi.

Procter painted the present picture upon his return to Newlyn after four years service with the Red Cross during WWI. The painting's strong sense of occasion, complex composition and strong palette are indicative of his specific talent as a decorative painter. In fact, the striking graphic energy of *On the Beach in Newlyn* anticipates by several years the bold style of advertising posters for British seaside resorts, an art form that boomed in the 1920s and 1930s.

However, a closer look within Procter's lively, sweeping composition reveals subtle borrowings from the tradition of religious wall painting. The young woman in the middle ground is posed holding an infant like a Raphael Madonna, her blond head 'haloed' by the cart wheel. Likewise, the boys in the foreground, haul a boat with the solemnity of Apostles gathering nets. Procter's use of brilliant primary colours lifts his subject matter out of the sobriety of traditional church wall painting, but he later became a successful painter of decorative murals. Therefore, it is tempting to see in this work similar stylistic references to Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes, which, four years later, would directly inspire Stanley Spencer's paintings for Sandham Memorial Chapel.



Leonard Rosoman RA OBE, 1913–2012

50 The Pianist
oil on canvas
122 x 152 cms 48 x 59½ ins
signed lower right



When Leonard Rosoman died this year at the age of 99, several tributes remarked that throughout his notably long career as a painter, muralist, war artist, and teacher, his work remained perennially youthful.

The vibrancy and immediacy that so much of his work retained was arguably connected with his talent for illustration. He made his first illustration in

1951, for the *Radio Times* to accompany notes for a production of Clifford Odets's play *Golden Boy*. Rosoman's illustration showed a solitary boxer trapped in a pool of light, rendered with the same shallow perspective, photographically cropped composition, and unsettling poetry found in this later canvas of a young woman glimpsed through a garden window, playing the piano to an unseen audience.

Ruskin Spear CBE RA NEAC, 1911–1990

51 The Enthusiast

oil on board
51 x 76 cms 20¹/₈ x 29⁷/₈ ins
signed lower right



Exhibited:
London, Royal Academy, *Summer Exhibition*, 1986, no. 5.

Ruskin Spear was born in Hammersmith and won a scholarship to Hammersmith School of Art, before entering the Royal College of Art, where he studied under Gilbert Spencer, Sir William Rothenstein and Charles Mahoney. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy when he was only twenty-one, and enjoyed great success as a painter and portraitist, in addition to becoming one of the most influential teachers of the post-war era at the Royal College of Art.

Possibly one of the most distinguishing features of his work is the comic warmth, the wryly-detached empathy he felt for his fellow Londoners. Many of his paintings, such as this portrait of a darts player, are studies of the ordinary people of his native West London neighbourhood, observed at the local Hammersmith pubs where he often drank with them, especially The Hampshire Hog and The Ravenscourt Arms.

Ruskin Spear CBE RA NEAC, 1911–1990

52 Worthing Beach

oil on board 66 x 81 cms 26 x 31¾ ins signed lower right



Because Ruskin Spear contracted polio as a child, he spent most of his time in a wheelchair, and this challenge to his mobility meant he generally did not venture far from his West London neighbourhood. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, he apparently made several trips to East and West Sussex. In 1956, he contributed *Spring at Rottingdean, East Sussex* (Dudley Museum) to *Seasons*, a group exhibition organized by the CAS and held at the Tate Gallery. Another later view of *Brighton Beach* (1965) is in the collection of

the Brighton and Hove Museums and Art Galleries. Although the latter work shares the same flattened, linear, photographically cropped composition as the present picture, which is undated, it was painted with much looser, thinner brushwork, and the attention to surface pattern and thicker impasto in *Worthing Beach* is more in keeping with Ruskin Spear's later work after the 1960s.

53 Finding Out About Art

oil on board 100 x 126 cms 39¾ x 49¾ ins



Provenance: Private collection.

Exhibited: London, Royal Academy, *Summer Exhibition*, 1987.

This group of art lovers gathered for what is possibly a summer morning gallery talk at the Royal Academy illustrates so much of what made Ruskin Spear arguably post-war Britain's most influential figurative painter. A masterful balance between form, space, and anecdote, it is also a clear example of Ruskin Spear's acute appreciation of other artists' work. He chose to dominate his composition with Anthony Caro's steel sculpture, *Early*

One Morning (1962, Tate Britain, and actually painted red), but manipulated the scale and the tonality of the piece to highlight his figure group. Equally, Ruskin Spear's careful observation of their attitudes and attributes – the slightly hunched middle-aged postures, clutched paper cups and brochures, shirtsleeves and sensible shoes – contribute to his wryly accurate, but uncritical picture of contemporary art appreciation.

Graham Sutherland OM, 1903–1980

54 Le Tropiques Menton

oil on paper
76 x 53 cms 29 7/8 x 20 7/8 ins
inscribed [sic] left and center

Between 1955 and 1961, most of Graham Sutherland's time was taken up with his tapestry commission for Coventry Cathedral. But in 1955, he purchased a La Villa Blanche in Menton, a modernistic villa designed in 1934 by the Irish architect Eileen Gray.

Sutherland had first visited the South of France in 1947, and subsequently, he and his wife, spent part of every year there. Inspired by the region's warmth and colour, between about 1949 and 1957, Sutherland's paintings took on more vibrant palettes and often included Mediterranean motifs, such as palm trees, cacti and vine pergolas, increasingly arranged in upright,

almost hieratical compositions. He first exhibited these works in 1952 at the British Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, and subsequently, in several shows in Paris, Amsterdam, Zurich, and London at the Tate Gallery.

It was also during this period that he painted some of his most renowned and controversial portraits, such as his elegantly reptilian study of Somerset Maugham (1949), in which he specifically incorporated exotic foliage and strong, hot colours to allude to his sitter's Far Eastern connections.



Michael Upton, 1938–2002

55 Roger Hilton's Grave, St Just, 1995
oil on board 47 x 92.5 cms 18½ x 36¾ ins



Provenance:
The Artist's Studio Estate, Atelier no. 686.

Exhibited:
Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, *John Moores Liverpool Exhibition*, 1995.

Michael Upton first met Roger and Rose Hilton briefly in the early 1960s, when he and Patrick Caulfield went to Penwith to study at one of Peter Lanyon's summer schools. In 1987, Upton and Rose later renewed their acquaintance when they exhibited together at the Newlyn Orion Galleries. Rose's work was hung in the Upper Gallery; Upton's was hung in the Lower Gallery. And this bicameral show presented a successful juxtaposition between their very different styles; Hilton's relying on colour, while Upton's focused on tone. One review of the show noted: 'Both Rose Hilton and Michael Upton have the power to make us stop and re-assess our attitude to the commonplace.'

The two artists became even closer in the 1990s, through new family ties, and Upton's move with his partner Sally Fleetwood to Mousehole. According to Sally, Upton made several paintings of the view from Rose's garden at Botallack. The present painting possibly began as a straightforward view over St Just from Botallack. But by including the slab-like forms in the foreground field, Upton, who was often noted to have a black sense of humour, lent the scene a sepulchral tone. However, his title was probably meant to be symbolic, rather than literal.

56 Hackney Library I, c. 1992
oil on board 35 x 71 cms 13¾ x 28 ins



Provenance:
with Galerie Vieille du Temple, Paris.
The Artist's Studio Estate, Atelier no. 558.

Exhibited:
London, Royal Academy, Summer Exhibition, 1992.
London, New English Art Club, 1992.

In the 1980s, a thread of social commentary emerged in Upton's work. Though he retained his same tonal palette of creams, ochres and green-browns, he began to paint scenes of the unemployed waiting in dole queues, or sitting in Hackney Library. Occasionally, he based his compositions directly on photographs taken from 1930s issues of the *Picture Post*, and in some cases he even painted directly over photocopied images. But as

Jane Hamilton has noted, Upton did not intend these works to be read as nostalgic illustrations of Depression-era Britain, but were instead his contemporary comment on Britain under the Thatcher government.¹

¹ Messum's, *Michael Upton 1938-2002: Paintings from the Studio Estate*, exhib. cat. (essay by Jane Hamilton), 2008, under no. 17.

Alfred Aaron Wolmark, 1877–1961

57 The Models, c. 1918
oil on board
86.4 x 46 cms 34 x 18½ ins

Provenance:
with The Fine Art Society, London, 1975.
Anonymous sale, Phillips, London, 16 May 1983, lot 40.

Although Alfred Wolmark made many studies of female nudes, mostly connected to his mythological, allegorical or idyllic subjects, he rarely painted male nudes. However, this vibrant, planar composition, painted around 1918, during the peak of his career, is an excellent example of how vital a role Wolmark felt colour played in his work:

'The basis of painting must primarily be form and colour... I want to put down all sorts of pieces of rich colour 'till (sic) I get the whole thing to look like a beautiful mosaic. Everything too must have unity and fullness. I will have no paucity and emptiness. I for one would like to fill great wall spaces with mosaics of glowing colour that speak to the mind like inspired music. For such work I am thoroughly equipped in strength, intensity, devotion and passion. To translate myself in terms

*of singing colour; to write down in rich harmonious melodies; of which the colours are notes, of which the values are orchestrations; to fill cities with romantic colour music, at once vivid and vital, such is my greatest ambition.'*¹

Born in Warsaw, Wolmark immigrated to London, and became a British subject in 1893. He always retained a keen sense of his Polish-Jewish heritage and initially made his name as a painter of Jewish historical subjects. In 1915, he was one of the key figures in forming the Ben Uri Art Society, which, in 2004, mounted a survey exhibition of his work, *Rediscovering Wolmark: a pioneer of British modernism*.

¹ See Ferens Art Gallery, Kingston, *Alfred Wolmark 1877–1961*, exhib. cat., n.d., quoted in the introduction by Charles Spencer.





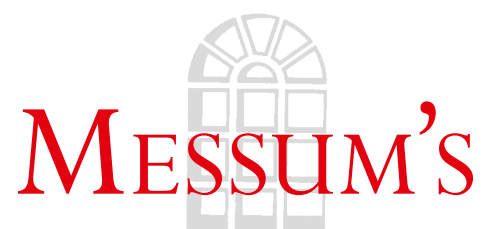
ISBN 978-1-908486-22-6 Publication No: CCCXXX
Published by David Messum Fine Art
© David Messum Fine Art

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior permission in writing from the publisher.

The Studio, Lords Wood, Marlow, Buckinghamshire.

Tel: 01628 486565 www.messums.com

Photography: Steve Russell Printed by Connekt Colour



www.messums.com