



Gerald Leslie Brockhurst (1890-1978), *By the Hills*, 1939, 76.2 × 63.5 cm, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, shown on the cover of the book by Patrick Elliott and Sacha Llewellyn, *True to Life: British Realist Painting in the 1920s & 1930s* (Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 2017, £22.99), cover image copyright Richard Woodward

- As many of you may know I am Laurence Shafe. I give regular talks at the Lightbox and I am a Tate guide.
- The talk lasts two hours from 10:30 to 12:30 with a coffee break in the middle of 20 minutes and with 10 minutes at the end for questions. The talk is an hour and a half divided in to two 45 minute sessions.
- **British Realism is not an art movement** but a loose collection of artists that painted in a realistic style. Of course, that was not new, the **Pre-Raphaelites** and many other painted in a realistic way but just before the First World War there was a flowering of modern art movements such as **Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Futurism, Vorticism and Abstraction**. After the war and because of the horrors of the war many artists across Europe wanted to return to an older, less extreme, more traditional world and this is known as

the **Return to Order**. In Britain, the modern art movements had had less impact and so it was a continuation of the way most artists painted. I must first clarify what I mean by realism as there is **no clear definition**.

NOTES

- There was an exhibition of their work in 2017 at the Scottish National Gallery of Art and this book was produced which has brought them back to the public's attention. The talk today is inspired by this book and the associated exhibition *True to Life: British Realist Painting in the 1920s & 1930s* (Patrick Elliott and Sacha Llewellyn) held at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 2017.
- "Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Modern Two), Sat 1 Jul 2017 - Sun 29 Oct 2017. Bringing together more than 80 paintings by an almost forgotten generation of artists, this exhibition explores the realist tradition in British art between the two World Wars. It focuses on scrupulously detailed realist painting, part of a world-wide trend at the time."
- Henry Tonks became "the most renowned and formidable teacher of his generation". Pupils of Tonks at the Slade included David Bomberg, Mark Gertler, Harold Gilman, Spencer Gore, Augustus John, Gwen John, Percy Wyndham Lewis, William Orpen, Stanley Spencer, Rex Whistler, Walter Sickert, William Rothenstein, C.R.W. Nevinson, Gwen John, Duncan Grant, and Paul Nash.
- British Realists as selected by ChatGPT
 - **Gerald Leslie Brockhurst** (1890-1978) was a British painter and etcher who was celebrated as a portraitist during the 1930s and 1940s, painting society figures such as Marlene Dietrich and the Duchess of Windsor².
 - **Meredith Frampton** (1894-1984) was a British painter who

was known for his portraits and still lifes¹.

- **James Cowie** (1886-1956) was a Scottish painter who was known for his portraits and landscapes¹.
- **Winifred Knights** (1899-1947) was a British painter who was known for her use of tempera and her paintings of religious subjects¹.
- **Stanley Spencer** (1891-1959) was a British painter who was known for his paintings of Biblical scenes and his portraits of people in his village¹.
- **Lucian Freud** (1922-2011) was a British painter who was known for his portraits and his nudes¹.
- **Thomas Monnington** (1902-1976) was a British painter who was known for his murals and his portraits¹.
- **Colin Gill** (1892-1940) was a British painter who was known for his murals and his portraits¹.
- **James Bateman** (1893-1959) was a British painter who was known for his portraits and his landscapes¹.
- **Mark Lancelot Symons** (1887-1935) was a British painter who was known for his portraits and his landscapes¹.

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Source: Conversation with Bing, 21/03/2023

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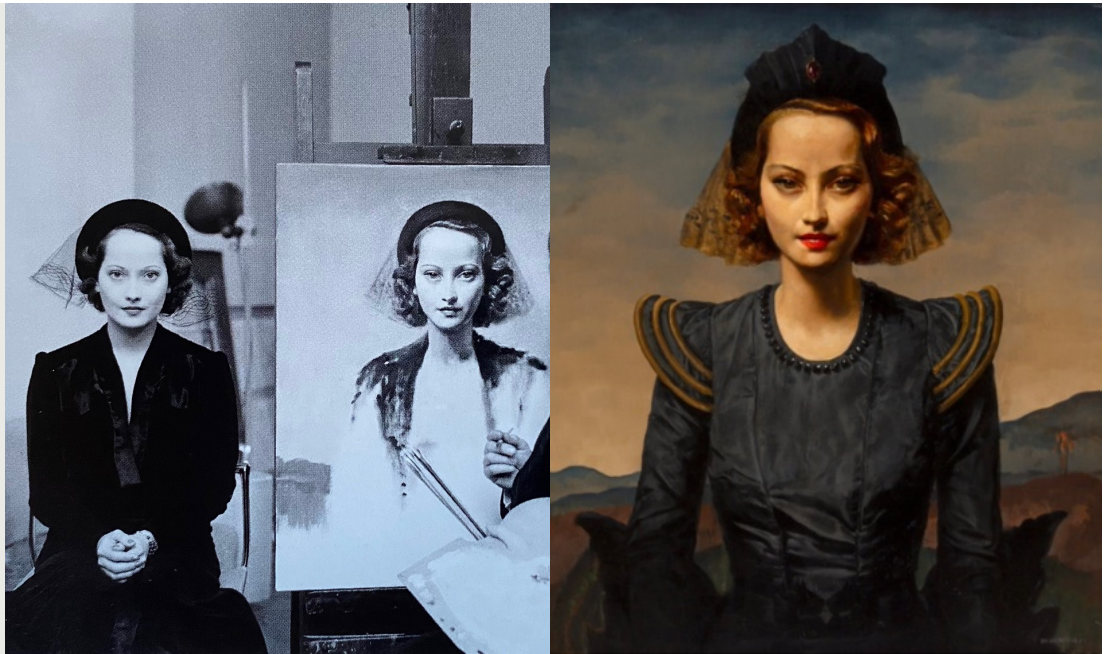
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Gerald Leslie Brockhurst painting Merle Oberon in his Chelsea studio, 1 February 1937

Gerald Leslie Brockhurst painting Merle Oberon in his Chelsea studio, 1 February 1937

- Wyndham Lewis remarked, "**Realism is a fine, manly, practical word that appeals to everyone as safe and satisfactory.**"
- But what does it mean exactly? This is the artist **Gerald Brockhurst** halfway through painting the British actress **Merle Oberon** (1911-1979) and at first glance it is difficult to tell in a photograph which is which. But why did artists paint in this photographic style? British art of the 1920s and 30s is often described in terms of the **emergence of abstract art** and artists such as **Ben Nicholson** are seen as **leading this movement**. However, the **majority of artists had no desire to go abstract** but they did want to find new ways to express themselves. **They were trained in accurate drawing** and applied this to their painting resulting in what is called a '**hard edged**' or '**brushless**' technique. Meaning you cannot see the brushstrokes. However, **their work was so varied that they were never defined as a school or style** and without a common approach they were **ignored by critics and historians** and so, until recently, they were forgotten.

- In Britain the training was based on drawing from life using a sharp pencil or fine sable brush and any deviation was **rigorously enforced**. **Henry Tonks** (1862-1937) a professor at the Slade was infuriated when one artist (Tristram Hillier) drew a geometric pattern and he never spoke to him again.
- (CLICK) This is **the finished portrait**. I described this style as photographic but we can see that it is not actually photographic, he is idealising her. He has made her face thinner, her neck longer, her eyes larger and so on. So, as we shall see, **realism doesn't mean photographic**, it means superficially like a photograph. The artist often had to invent and exaggerate in order to make something look real.
- There is **no particular order** to this talk it is a **cornucopia** of British artists from about one hundred years ago that you might not have heard about. So let's get started ...

NOTES

- These artists lived during a period of rapid change. They were born at the end of the Victorian period before manned flights and moving images and many lived and worked right through to when Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol were at the height of their fame.
- **Merle Oberon** (1911–1979) was a British actress who began her film career in British films as Anne Boleyn in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933). She was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance in *The Dark Angel* (1935). Her nomination made her the first Asian actress to have received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Actress. Oberon hid her mixed heritage out of fear of discrimination and the impact it would have had on her career.

REFERENCES

Patrick Elliot, Sacha Llewellyn, *True to Life: British Realist Painting in the 1920s & 1930s*, National Galleries of Scotland, 2019



Charles Spencelayh (1865–1958), *Why War?*, 1938, 94 × 115 cm, Harris Museum & Art Gallery

Charles Spencelayh (1865–1958), *War or No War, Who Cares?*, 1944, 49.8 × 38.2 cm, Tate

Charles Spencelayh (1865–1958), *Why War?*, 1938, 94 × 115 cm, Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston

Charles Spencelayh (1865–1958), *War or No War, Who Cares?*, 1944, 49.8 × 38.2 cm, Tate

- I start with a painting from near the end of the period I am covering, 1938. It is clearly a painting but it is similar to a photograph and it is typical of this artist, Charles Spencelayh (pronounced 'Spence-lay').
- This painting, *Why War?* was exhibited at the 1939 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and was voted **Picture of the Year**. It was extremely popular with the public. Thousands of copies were sold as colour prints and the original was sold for £315 to the Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston, Lancashire.
- Having fought in '**the war to end all wars**', this First World War veteran sadly contemplates the **onset of the Second World War**. Near him lies a new gas mask and a newspaper, the *Daily Sketch*, with the headline '**Premiere Flying to Hitler**'. This refers to **Neville Chamberlain's** attempt to make peace with Hitler in September 1938. The gas mask looks out of place among the tea things and it signifies the horrific possibilities that war could bring to a

defenceless civilian population. Spencelayh's training as a miniaturist allowed him to build up a story of visual clues in painstaking detail. (ArtUK website)

- (CLICK) This painting, *War or no war, who cares?*, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1945, depicts an old man dressed in gardening clothes, the newspaper on the table presumably reporting the recent events of the war. Spencelayh's humorous recreation of the life of a working man would have endorsed **the stoicism of ordinary people** at a time when the war had already continued for five years, but had made little difference to the old man whose solitary life is evident from his possessions. The crowded interior containing a clock, stuffed animal, painting, and gardening fork is characteristic of many of Spencelayh's paintings. His highly detailed technique he used and it earned him the label '**the Human Camera**'. New styles of painting such as **Impressionism passed him by and he continued the Victorian tradition of genre painting**. He was supported by many wealthy **patrons including Queen Mary** (1867-1953, wife of George V, 1865-1936). From 1892, when he was 27, to the year of his death, when he was 93, he exhibited at the Royal Academy regularly. Critics regarded his work as **old-fashioned by the public loved his work** which was reproduced on calendars and cards.
- In 1957, one year before Spencelayh's death at the age of ninety three, the critic of The Manchester Guardian remarked of his paintings, '**Most of them depict old codgers** - the obsolete slang rises unbidden - **in junk-crammed interiors that will be of considerable interest to the social historian of the future**'.

NOTES

- The painting on the wall of *Why War?* is a print of Benjamin West, *Death of Nelson*, 1806, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

- 38 million gas masks were manufactured by one factory in Lancashire starting in 1938 and were issued in 1939. People were advised to seal their windows with tape and post and telephone boxes were painted red with a paint that turned green on exposure to the gas. Wardens would warn people of a gas attack using wooden rattles.
- Spencelayh would build the rooms in his studio using frames. He would even include the wallpaper and he had room full of junk used to populate the sets.

BIO:CHARLES SPENCELAYH

- Charles Spencelayh (October 27, 1865 – June 25, 1958) was an English genre painter and portraitist in the Academic style.
- Spencelayh was born in Rochester in Kent, and first studied at the National Art Training School, South Kensington. He showed his work at the Paris Salon, but most of his exhibitions were in Britain. Between 1892 and 1958, he exhibited more than 70 paintings at the Royal Academy, including "Why War" (1939), which won the Royal Academy 'Picture of the Year'. He was also a founder member of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters, where he exhibited 129 miniatures between 1896 and 1954.
- Many of his subjects were of domestic scenes, painted with an almost photographic detail, such as "The Laughing Parson" (1935) and "His Daily Ration" (1946). He also painted still life subjects including "Apples" (1951) and "Exploration" (1931).
- Spencelayh was a favourite of Queen Mary, who was an avid collector of his work. In 1924 he painted a miniature of King George V for the Queen's dolls house.
- On 17 December 2009, Spencelayh's masterpiece "The Old Dealer" was sold at auction at Sotheby's for over £345,000.

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Pamela Bianco (1906-1994),
Self-portrait, c. 1926, 33.5 ×
31 cm, private collection

Pamela Bianco (1906-1994), *Self-portrait*, c. 1926, 33.5 × 31 cm,
private collection

Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*

Pamela Bianco, *Flora*, 1919

- A very different style of art. Pamela Bianco was self-taught and became famous as a teenager. (CLICK) Her mother Margery Williams was a well-known author of the children's book *The Velveteen Rabbit* (1922). (CLICK) Her father was an Italian poet and she spent her childhood between England, Italy and America. (CLICK) **When she was 11** her drawings were exhibited in Turin and because of the critical acclaim **she had a solo show in London in 1919**. This is a drawing of *Flora* from the exhibition. (CLICK)
- She received the **support of well known figures including Clive Bell** (1881-1964, art critic), Ben Nicholson (1894-1982, artist), Leonora Carrington (1917-2011, British-born Mexican artist), **Walter de la Mare** (1873-1956, English poet and novelist) and Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938, Italian poet and playwright).
- **Her second solo exhibition in 1920 included paintings** and

showed an appreciation of modern art. In 1921 supported by a **wealthy patron** she **exhibited in New York** and she and her family emigrated and she **spent the rest of her life there** apart from three years in Florence in 1929-31.

- This intense self-portrait was painted **when she was 20** and at the height of her fame. Following major exhibitions in Chicago and Boston she suffered from depression and a mental breakdown which started when she was 20. She recovered and continued to hold solo exhibitions in New York until her death in 1994, aged 87. Unlike many child artistic prodigies she continued to be a successful artist until her death.

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Gerald Leslie Brockhurst (1890-1978), *By the Hills*, 1939, 76.2 × 63.5 cm, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

Background detail of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), *Mona Lisa*, 1503-6, 77 × 53 cm, Louvre

Gerald Leslie Brockhurst (1890-1978), *Portrait of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll*, c. 1931, 76.2 × 64.1 cm, Tate

Gerald Leslie Brockhurst (1890-1978), *Adolescence*, 1932, 37 × 26.5 cm, British Council

- **Gerald Leslie Brockhurst**, *By The Hills*, 1939 was selected for the **front page of the catalogue** of the exhibition I mentioned. After much speculation the Daily Mirror discovered the model was the society beauty **Lady Margaret Strickland**. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy's annual exhibition in **1939** and it must have been one of the artist's last paintings before leaving Britain for America later that year. She was the elder daughter of the **Earl of Darnley** and featured in **advertisements for shampoos, Pond's cream and cigarettes**, and acted on the stage. It was she who approached Brockhurst to model for a portrait. The head alone took **twenty-eight sittings**. Brockhurst thought she was a bit thin so **used a**

model he called Dorette for the body.

- (CLICK) The title of the painting was thought up by Strickland. The landscape background is loosely based on paintings by **Leonardo da Vinci**.
- (CLICK) In the 1930s Brockhurst became a **sought after society portrait painter**. This is a portrait of the socialite **Margaret Sweeney, Duchess of Argyll** (1912-1993) who you might remember from the BBC series **A Very British Scandal**. Paintings like this were popular as they were a modern expression of traditional artistic values. They combined rich detail with a subtle assessment of character, Brockhurst specialised in painting **rich, famous and often highly independent women**. In this painting the dramatic landscape background of volcanic mountains and loch refer to the sitter's **Scottish heritage of which she was intensely proud**.(CLICK)
- He was born in Birmingham, the son of a coal merchant and **showed extraordinary drawing skills** and entered the **Birmingham School of Art at the age of twelve**. His headmaster announced he had discovered '**a young Botticelli**'. He won a **gold medal at the Royal Academy School** and a travelling scholarship.
- (CLICK) The etching that is considered his masterpiece but was **controversial at the time** is this, **Adolescence** (1932, 37 x 26.5 cm, etching, British Council). The model was **Kathleen Woodward, a 16-17 year-old model at the Royal Academy School** who he met in 1929 when he was 39. He **rechristened her Dorette** and they **eloped to America** in 1939 creating an **enormous scandal**. He married Dorette in 1947 after he had divorced his first wife (Anaïs, née Folin, a Frenchwoman) who he had married in 1911. Dorette is of Greek origin and means 'gift of God'.

NOTES

- **Margaret Strickland** (c. 1880–1970) was a prolific English writer of magazine stories and novels for adults and children, including the Michael Gerahty detective novels.

BIO:BROCKHURST

- **Gerald Leslie Brockhurst** (1890–1978) was an English painter and etcher. He was born in Birmingham, the son of a coal merchant and showed extraordinary drawing skills and entered the Birmingham School of Art at the age of twelve. His headmaster announced he had discovered 'a young Botticelli'. He won a gold medal at the Royal Academy School and a travelling scholarship. During the 1930s and 1940s he was celebrated as a portraitist, painting society figures such as Marlene Dietrich and the Duchess of Windsor. Today he is best known for his small etched prints of beautiful, idealised women - many of them modelled by his first and second wives.
- **Margaret Sweeney, Duchess of Argyll** (1912-1993) was a society beauty best known for her celebrated divorce case in 1963. The Duke of Argyll alleged she had had 88 lovers including David Niven (when he was 18 and she was 15 and she became pregnant), the future Edward VIII, Duncan Sandys (a Cabinet Minister) and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. She was the daughter of a wealthy American woman and a Scottish textile millionaire. When she came out in London in 1931 she was named debutante of the year and photographed by Cecil Beaton. She married an Irish-American stockbroker called Charles Sweeney in 1933 and did not become Duchess of Argyll until 1951. When this was painted she was still Margaret Whigham, daughter of a Scottish millionaire George Whigham.
- "This etching is considered Brockhurst's print masterpiece and is probably his most celebrated work in the medium. Based on a

charcoal drawing in the Wiggin Collection, Boston Public Library, Massachusetts, the sitter is **Dorette Woodward**. In 1929 Brockhurst met Kathleen Woodward when she was a 17 year old model at the Royal Academy Schools in London. Their relationship developed rapidly and Brockhurst rechristened her Dorette; the pair eloped to America amidst great scandal. For Brockhurst, Dorette embodied his vision of young womanhood. **The work displays Brockhurst's virtuosity in rendering a variety of surfaces, textures and tones.** His depiction of a young girl contemplating her image in a mirror has both a **sensual vulnerability and sexual yearning** rare in Brockhurst's work." (British Council website)

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True to Life catalogue, page 66.



Edward Burra (1905-1976), *The Snack Bar*, 1930, 76.2 x 55.9 cm, Tate

Edward Burra (1905-1976), *The Snack Bar*, 1930, 76.2 x 55.9 cm, Tate
 Edward Burra (1905-1976), *The Tea Shop*, 1929, 60.3 x 47.6 cm, gouache on paper, the artist's estate

- Edward Burra grew up in Rye, East Sussex and went to Chelsea School of Art and the Royal College of Art. **He was an acute observer of the everyday, often exaggerating it into caricature** in order to comment on society.
- At first sight we see a café with a woman eating a ham sandwich that has just been prepared by a bartender. The woman eats distractedly but the man cuts the meat with enjoyment while glancing at her. This creates a tension between them.
- Women had achieved more freedom in the 1930s and, as one historian put it, **'In big cities the single woman - the car-driving, tennis-playing office employee with bobbed hair and fashionable clothes, who initiated relationships and broke them off - came to be taken as a matter of course'** (Günter Metken, 'Cafés of the Twenties', *The 1920s: Age of the Metropolis*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal 1991, p.150).
- However, there is a **darker interpretation** suggested by certain

details and by Burra's '**sustained interest in potential violence and shady pleasure**'. We know the scene is set in the Continental Snack Bar in **Shaftesbury Avenue** in London, and the woman is **probably a prostitute**. One critic wrote, '**Soho tarts were mostly French around 1930 and dressed and made up just like that, I can remember well**'. George Melly, the English jazz and blues singer, asked, '**Have you ever seen a more phallic sandwich?**'. Commentators have suggested that the splayed legs and ankle-chain of the woman outside the door indicate she is also a prostitute.

- But we can go further. The barman's **protruding lower lip and large hands** identify him as a 'degenerate' and in particular a strangler, according to **nineteenth-century theories of criminality** (written by Cesare Lombroso and Johann Kaspar Lavater). So Burra has created what appears to be an everyday scene but with an underlying sexual tension and suppressed violence. He best known for his depictions of Paris nightlife in the 1920s, the black culture of Harlem, New York, in the 1930s and the horrors of the Spanish civil war followed by the Second World War.

NOTES

- One term used for a brothel was a **meat house** so his carving suggest the possibility of a Jack the Ripper sex murderer.
- He knew the work of **German artist Georg Grosz** and the heightened atmosphere of surrealist painting. He contributed to the 1936 'International Surrealist Exhibition in London'.
- **Edward Burra** was one of the most elusive British artists. He only gave one interview and his response to being asked about the meaning of his painting was "I never tell anyone anything".
- **Jack the Ripper** is the best-known name for an unidentified serial killer generally believed to have been active in the largely

impoverished areas in and around the Whitechapel district of London in 1888.

- **Flappers** were a generation of young Western women in the 1920s who wore short skirts, bobbed their hair, listened to jazz, and flaunted their disdain for what was then considered acceptable behaviour. Flappers were seen as brash for wearing excessive makeup, drinking, treating sex in a casual manner, smoking, driving cars and flouting social and sexual norms.

BIO:BURRA

- Edward John Burra (1905–1976) was an English painter, draughtsman, and printmaker, best known for his depictions of Paris nightlife in the 1920s, the black culture of Harlem in the 1930s and the horrors of the Spanish civil war followed by the Second World War.
- He was born in London but his lifelong home was his parents house, Springfield Lodge, **Rye**, East Sussex. His father was a barrister and later Chairman of East Sussex Council so Burra never suffered from financial problems. The family had eight servants and 11 acres of land overlooking Rye.
- **Burra suffered from the age of five from acute rheumatoid arthritis** and a genetic blood defect that caused pernicious anaemia and because of his illness Burra was educated at home. He later attended Chelsea School of Art and then the Royal College of Art and travelled round Europe where he met Paul Nash who became a good friend.
- In the 1920s, despite the pain of his illness he painted many scenes of Paris nightlife. On his return he exhibited at the New English Art Club. At this stage of his career his work was sometimes humorous, such as his painting *The Tea Shop* (1929) showing naked and scantily dressed 'flappers' serving tea in a typical British tea shop. His first solo exhibition was at the

Leicester Galleries in 1929.

- In the 1930s he visited New York and painted scenes of Harlem and the jazz world. In the mid-1930s he visited Spain and his work took on a darker tone. In 1935 he witnessed a church being burned down a year before the start of the Spanish Civil War and Burra painted it as a crowd with bloody weapons with a devilish monster encouraging them. His work became increasingly surreal and disturbing during the Second World War.
- In the 1950s he turned away from the human form to paint luminous landscapes and powerful flower paintings.

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Hilda Carline (1889-1950), *Elsie*, 1929, 173 × 81 cm, Brighton and Hove Museums



Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Country Girl: Elsie*, 1929, Stanley Spencer Gallery

Hilda Carline (1889-1950), *Elsie*, 1929, 173 × 81 cm, Brighton and Hove Museums

Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Country Girl: Elsie*, 1929, Stanley Spencer Gallery

- This was painted by Hilda Carline, the first wife of Stanley Spencer. She was born in London and her father and two brothers were all artists and her mother became an amateur artist. She studied art in Hampstead and then at the Slade and through her brothers met former Slade student Stanley Spencer who **she married in 1925**. They settled in Burghclere, Hampshire in 1927 and moved to Cookham in 1932 and had two daughters. She divorced Spencer in 1937 following his relationship with Patricia Preece. She suffered from depression and had a mental breakdown in 1942 and died from cancer in 1950.
- They lived in Burghclere while Spencer was painting the murals at Sandham Memorial Chapel and they employed a **maid called Elsie Munday** described as a "real country girl of the most stirring character". Carline and Spencer had a quarrelsome relationship and Elsie acted as a go between.

- (CLICK) Spencer chanced upon Carline painting Elsie and set up **his easel right behind her** and painted *Country Girl: Elsie*.

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Meredith Frampton (1894-1984), *Woman Reclining* later changed to *Marguerite Kelsey*, 1928, 120.8 × 141.2 cm, Tate

Meredith Frampton (1894-1984), *A triple portrait of Ernest Gowers, KCB, KBE, Senior Regional Commissioner for London; Lt Col AJ Child, OBE, MC, Director of Operations and Intelligence; and KAL Parker, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, in the London Regional Civil Defence Control Room*, 1943, 148 × 168.5 cm, Imperial War Museum. Gowers stands on the left in front of a map of London. The others are poised behind a desk on the right.

- The title *Woman Reclining* was later changed to the name of the model **Marguerite Kelsey** (in 1982) who was renowned for her **gracefulness and ability to hold poses for a long time**. Her dress and shoes were chosen and purchased by Frampton for this portrait. They are both classical and, being **uncorseted, deliberately modern**. The simple, short-sleeved pale tunic dress worn with low-heeled shoes and her **straight hair** were all essential elements of the **fashionable boyish 'garçonne style'** created by the couturiers **Coco Chanel** and Jean Patou from the mid-1920s. (Tate gallery label). **Marguerite Kelsey was about nineteen** when she sat for this

portrait and she sat for many artists including Laura Knight, Augustus John and Mark Gertler.

- **Another example from 1943 is this triple portrait.** Ernest Gowers (1880-1966) had a long career in the Civil Service and during the war was Senior Regional Commissioner for Civil Defence for London. He ran civil defence during the Blitz from this concrete bunker under the Natural History Museum. **Churchill** told him that if communication with the Government was lost **he would have to take control and make decisions without consultation.** So he could have been running the country. After the war he headed up many enquiries but he is best remembered for his book *Plain Words*
- **Frampton's technique** was to paint without visible brushstrokes and with almost **photographic realism.** He sometimes took a **whole year** over a single painting. Nearly all his paintings were commissioned and he painted society women, academics and scientists.
- After the war his eyesight began to fail and he was **largely forgotten** but his **first solo exhibition in 1982 at the Tate** restored his reputation.

NOTES

- He was **born in St John's Wood, London** the only child of the **sculptor Sir George Frampton** and the painter Christabel Frampton. He attended Westminster School, St John's Wood School of Art and then the **Royal Academy School** where he won both first prize and a silver medal.
- **During WWI he served on the Western Front sketching enemy trenches** and interpreting aerial photographs. After the war he became **one of the most highly regarded of British painters** and exhibited at the Royal Academy nearly every year. He became (an ARA in 1934) and an **Academician in 1942.**

- During WWII he received two commissions but only one was completed of Sir Ernest Gowers. **After the war his sight began to fail** and he retired from the Royal Academy and moved to a **hilltop house** overlooking Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire that he had designed in the 1930s. He spent the rest of his life improving and maintaining the house including designing the furniture.

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Colin Gill (1892-1940), *Allegro*, 1921, 117 × 228.5 cm, British School in Rome

Colin Gill (1892-1940), *Study for 'L'Allegro'*, 1921, 54.6 × 61 cm, Tate

- **Colin Gill is the cousin of the controversial sculptor Eric Gill.** Colin Gill was born in Bexleyheath and went to the Slade in 1910. He was the **first person to win the prestigious Rome Scholarship** in Decorative Painting but his studies in Rome were stopped by the start of World War One.
- He served as a second Lieutenant on the **Western Front** in a heavy artillery brigade and later as a camouflage officer. In 1918 he was invalided out with **gas poisoning**. He briefly became an **official war artist** and then returned to his studies in Rome and in 1920 he met and **fell in love with Winifred Knights** who had won the Rome Scholarship for painting that year.
- At the school in Rome the most important painting was this one, ***Allegro*** (a musical term meaning 'quickly and brightly'). **It was inspired by Milton's poem *L'Allegro*** ('cheerful man') about the **delights of a spring day**. It includes the lines:

There on beds of violets blue,

*And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.*

- He was inspired by the **beautiful hill-top village of Anticoli Corrado** (pronounced 'an-tee-koh-lee koh-RAH-doh') outside Rome whose women were renowned for their beauty. Artists came from all over Europe in the summer months and the women of the town posed as models. This work follows the convention of the time for a decorative work, it is a balanced composition but **the subject matter has no meaning**. When it was exhibited in 1922 the *Guardian* **praised the rhythm of the forms** and the draughtsmanship but doubted if anyone could follow "**the Allegory of nude and semi-nude figures and ladies with birdcages, and Italian peasants, and donkeys and children**".
- He has included the other students in Rome. **The figure on the left holding a birdcage is Winifred Knights** who arrived as he was finishing the picture. When Knights arrived in Rome Gill's wife and son were in England and he was **asked to look after Knights**. They went on journeys all round Rome looking at art and **he fell in love with her** although she wrote to her aunt "**I miss Gill very much now, we have become very good friends. We are very much alike & have had some very good times together**". Gill added her to the composition over the top of a crucifixion on the hill in the background. He wrote a sonnet to her which included the lines "**You hold my heart like a bird in a cage**".
- To the right of Knights is **Alfred Harimann who won the Rome Scholarship** for Sculpture in 1920. He is looking at one of the beauties of the town while his wife **to the left of Knights** looks on. The **engraver Job Nixon is standing on the right**.

- (CLICK) This is a study he did for the painting which is now in the Tate. We do not know who the model was.
- He exhibited at the Royal Academy and taught at the Royal College of Art. In 1939 went on a honeymoon to South Africa where he undertook a major mural project but he **died suddenly in 1940** aged 48 before he completed the work.

REFERENCES

True to Life catalogue, pages 86-87



Lancelot Myles Glasson (1894-1959), *The Young Rower*, 1932, 102 x 76 cm, Touchstones Rochdale, gift from Councillor A. W. Kay-Menzies, 1933

Lancelot Myles Glasson (1894-1959), *Repose*, c. 1920, Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove

- Acclaimed as the Royal Academy **'Picture of the Year' in 1932**, 'The Young Rower' is similar in style to paintings by Dod Procter and Laura Knight of young, unselfconscious women. In comparison, despite its cool tones and what the *Sunday Times* reporter described as the model's **'Degas-like pose'**, it has a distinctly voyeuristic quality. As Sir Thomas Monnington, President of the Royal Academy in the 1960s, later recalled, **'It looked chaste, but it was quite sexy really.'** However, none of the press comments mention her bare breasts (see below).
- The model was Freda Walker who lived to 95 and had a copy of this picture on her flat in Twickenham for most of her life.

CELEBRATION OR EXPLOITATION

- Shown at the RA Summer Exhibition in 1932 and widely acclaimed

the 'Picture of the Year'. But was it a celebration of an athletic young rower or an excuse to show a semi-naked picture of a young woman? It divided people at the time as exhibition goers were used to seeing classical nudes but this is a semi-nude woman in a modern setting

- Lancelot Myles Glasson was **born in Twickenham** into a comfortably-off family. He was sent to Marlborough College and was a Captain in World War One. He was **badly injured at the Somme** and had a **leg amputated** and was awarded the Military Cross. After the war he decided to become an artist and attended the Heatherley School and the Royal Academy School. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1928 and also worked in the **family firm, a beer-bottling company, eventually becoming its chairman**. He specialised in portraits and sportswomen. He was Head of the Camouflage Unit in the Second World War and after the war painted only sporadically.

PRESS COMMENT

- The Daily News of 28 April 1932 said that The Young Rower "depicts a young woman in the dressing-room of a rowing club. She is shown in black shorts kneeling to lace up her shoe. The treatment of the subject is **exceptional for its lithe vitality**".
- The Scotsman of 3 May 1932 called it "a **beautiful study** of a rowing girl, wearing shorts, and bending over to pull up her rowing socks".
- A female columnist for The Yorkshire Herald commented "... Mr Glasson's young woman stands for **sexless outdoor femininity**".
- John Bradley of Shrewsbury wrote that it inspired me with feelings of **mingled admiration, reverence and awe**...
- "Art Lover" writing from the Royal Societies Club, London SW1, thought it ...**well drawn and soundly painted**...
- "Adastras" of Leeds held that it was executed with the **respect**

due to the subject giving it an **uplifting dignity**...

- Cyril M. Strugnell of Guildford felt that the artwork **depicts the clean and sportsmanlike mind of a thorough English gentleman**...

REFERENCES

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-young-rower-90057>

<https://heartheboatsing.com/2021/12/30/glassons-young-rower-celebration-or-exploitation/>

<https://artuk.org/discover/artists/glasson-lancelot-myles-18941959>



Gluck (born Hannah Gluckstein, 1895-1978, aged 82), *Medallion (YouWe)*, 1936, private collection

Gluck (born Hannah Gluckstein, 1895-1978), *Chromatic*, 1932, 121.9×119.4 cm, private collection

- **Hannah Gluckstein was born in London to a wealthy Jewish family who founded the successful J. Lyons & Co. chain of restaurants and cafés.** She was **largely self-taught** but attended St John's Wood Art School. In 1916 she visited the **Newlyn colony** in Cornwall and became friends with **Dod and Ernest Proctor and Laura Knight**. She bought a cottage there which she visited regularly. By the age of 23 she was using the **name Gluck** partly because it was **ungendered** and partly to **hide her famous family name**. She had **regular solo exhibitions** in London and became a well-known figure on the art scene because of her androgynous appearance, short hair, wearing men's clothes and smoking a pipe. She bought a **large house in Hampstead** and in 1944 moved to Steyning in Sussex. She was **fiercely independent** and never exhibited at the Royal Academy or other prestigious venues but only at solo exhibitions.

- (CLICK) Later, she became well-known for her **highly detailed flower paintings** which were inspired by her lover from 1932-36, who was the florist **Constance Spry**.(CLICK) This double portrait shows Gluck with her next and lifelong lover the American **socialite Nesta Obermer** who remained married to her wealthy husband during her relationship with Gluck. Gluck is in the foreground.

REFERENCES

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True to Life catalogue, page 89



Sleeping Ariadne, Vatican

Lancelot Myles Glasson (1894-1959), *Repose*, c. 1920, Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove



Lancelot Myles Glasson (1894-1959), *Repose*, c. 1920, Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove

Sleeping Ariadne, Phrygian marble. Photograph: Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio-Clementino

- *Repose*, also by Glasson, shows two young women on a cliff top by a beach, one is resting after reading with an apple beside her. The other is drying herself.
- (CLICK) The pose of the one who has been reading is reminiscent of the statue of the ***Sleeping Ariadne*** in the Pio Clementino museum in the Vatican. Probably a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original, it was acquired by Pope Julius II in 1512. The figure was shortly after identified as Cleopatra, partly because of the snake bracelet on her upper arm. (Wikipedia and *The Guardian*, 'Waking the gods: how the classical world cast its spell over British art', Charlotte Higgins).
- We see this pose in Michelangelo's *Dawn* and we will see it later in *Morning* (1926) by Dod Procter.

NOTES

- The apple represents temptation and the primrose represents youth

and renewal. In the Victorian language of flowers a gift of primroses means 'I can't live without you'.

REFERENCES

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-young-rower-90057>

<https://heartheboatsing.com/2021/12/30/glassons-young-rower-celebration-or-exploitation/>



John Luke (1906-1975), *Judith and Holofernes*, 1929, 50 × 60.5 cm, Armagh County Museum, purchased 1980

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c. 1656), *Judith Slaying Holofernes*, c. 1612-13, 158.8 × 125.5 cm, Museo Capodimonte, Naples

- In 1929 **John Luke** won **second prize at the Slade** for this painting of the **well-known Bible story of Judith and Holofernes** brought up-to-date. The Slade steeped its students in the art of the Italian Renaissance but (CLICK) this subject was more common in seventeenth-century Italian Baroque, such as Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c. 1656), *Judith Slaying Holofernes*. (CLICK) Luke's sister, Sadie, appears to have been the model for both female figures in the painting.
- **John Luke** (1906–1975) was born in Belfast the fifth of seven sons and one daughter of James Luke and his wife Sarah. He attended the Hillman Street National School and in 1920 went to work at the York Street Flax Spinning Company. He later joined Workman and Clark Shipyard where he used to cut fibre¹³. He was a figurative painter, landscape artist, muralist, and sculptor and **is considered one of the greatest artists of the 20th century in Ireland**, he had

exceptional artistic talents and came up with significant artistic works during his lifetime².

REFERENCES

Source: Conversation with Bing, 22/03/2023

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(3) John Luke Biography, Life, Interesting Facts - Famous Birthdays By <https://www.sunsigns.org/famousbirthdays/profile/john-luke/> Accessed 22/03/2023.

(4) John Luke, Irish Artist, 1906 - 1975 | Art sold at Auction - Adam's. <https://www.adams.ie/irish-artist-directory/john-luke-art-sold-at-auction> Accessed 22/03/2023.

John Luke (1906–1975),
The Old Callan Bridge,
1945, 53 × 76, Armagh
County Museum



John Luke (1906–1975), *The Old Callan Bridge*, 1945, 53 × 76,
Armagh County Museum

- Luke was **born in Belfast** and **worked as a riveter in a shipyard** but following **evening classes** at the Belfast College of Art he **won a scholarship** that enabled him to attend full-time. He won many prizes including one that enabled him to study at the **Slade**. He won the **second prize two years running**, but he **failed to obtain a teaching job** and so returned to Belfast and started to paint from his imagination. In later years he would **spent months or even years on each painting**. After carefully planning the composition he would paint meticulously and slowly in tempera.
- The bridge spans the River Callan on the outskirts of Armagh city. The work shows the bridge with the windmill tower in the background and in the foreground a lane with a group of children, dogs and a man and boy walking downhill.

REFERENCE

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Gladys Hynes (1888-1958), *Noah's Ark*, 1919, 107 × 147 cm, private collection

Gladys Hynes (1888-1958), *Noah's Ark*, 1919, 107 × 147 cm, private collection

- **Noah's Ark** was exhibited at the **Daily Express Young Artists' Exhibition** (at The Galleries of the Royal Society of British Artists in Pall Mall) in June 1927 where it was on sale for 100 guineas.
- The work is **highly original**; with its well defined outlines, clearly delineated areas of bold and vigorous colour and hard-edged imagery. **Hynes was friends with Ezra Pound**, the American poet and critic who gave the name **Vorticism** to the movement in 1913 and some say this work was influenced by the movement.
- *The Observer's* critic (P. G. Konody) also saw the **influence of the Italian Renaissance** in Hynes work, writing in 1922, "her assumed **naïveté, backed by consummate draughtsmanship**, is perfectly delightful, her **sense of humour probably unique among women artists**."
- This amusing work has elements of a **children's nursery rhyme illustration** — "**The animals went in two by two, the elephant and the kangaroo**", but here the kangaroo's are being encouraged to enter and the elephants lag far behind while Noah keeps count

and a semi-clad female looks after the parrots.

NOTES

- *Noah's Ark* was exhibited at the Daily Express Young Artists' Exhibition at The Galleries of the Royal Society of British Artists in Pall Mall in June 1927 where it was on sale for 100 guineas.

BIO:HYNES

- "Gladys Hynes was born in Indore, India, to an Irish Catholic family, with whom she emigrated to London in 1891, later studying at the **London School of Art** in Earl's Court. After her family moved to Penzance in 1906, she attended the Stanhope Forbes School of Painting, **Newlyn**. She returned to London in 1919, where she settled in Hampstead.
- Hynes was a supporter of the Irish Republican cause (her correspondence with Desmond Fitzgerald is the subject of an article by Ed Vulliamy in *The Guardian* 26.03.2016). A member of the CWSS, she was also an impassioned **campaigner for women's rights**, often challenging the social construction of gender and sexuality in her work. Many of the paintings she produced during WWII were shaped by her mainly pacifist convictions.
- During her career, Hynes contributed to **Roger Fry's** (1866–1934) **Omega Workshops**, illustrated books – including the folio edition of Ezra Pound's *A Draft of the Cantos* nos. XVII to XXVII (1928) – undertook sculpture commissions and theatre designs. She exhibited with the RA, the LG, the International Society of Sculptors, the Paris Salon and at the 1924 Venice Biennale." (artbiogs.co.uk)

REFERENCES

- *True to Life* catalogue, page 95

Laura Knight (1877-1970), *The Last Act*, 1929, 139.7 × 106.7 cm,
Dundee Art Galleries



Laura Knight (1877-1970), *The Last Act*, 1929, 139.7 × 106.7 cm,
Dundee Art Galleries

- This painting is one of a series inspired by **Captain Bertram Mills's circus** at Olympia. Knight went there regularly in the 1920s to sketch. It was commissioned by **Major Evelyn Atherley** and Knight said **she never had the courage to exhibit it**. The Major is in the **bottom right** corner with **his housekeeper** holding his **dog 'Blinkers'** to look at the lions performing without a cage. All the beasts are over life-size and fierce at the Major's request. **The clown Joe Craston** is on the ring fence with his ape that only he and its keeper could touch. **A pig sits next to him** spelling out the Major's pet name **P-U-P-P-Y in cards** with letters on them.
- Laura Knight (née Johnson, 1877-1970) one of the most famous and prolific female British artists started life in most impoverished circumstances, having to quickly learn how to fend for herself from an early age as together with her sister Eva ("Sis") she became orphaned in her late teens.
 - She was the **first woman to be elected as a Royal Academician** and the first husband-and-wife to be Royal

Academicians. Her husband was Harold Knight.

- She was the **only woman to be given War Commissions in the Two World Wars**.
- In 1946, at the age of 69! She was **commissioned** as the only British artist to cover the **Nuremberg Trials**.
- The **first female artist** to be made a **Dame of the British Empire** at a time when such awards were rarely given.
- She became most famous in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and then became known by the press as the grand old lady of art but she kept on painting and **exhibiting up to her death in her 93rd year in 1970**.
- The **first woman** to have had a **retrospective** exhibition at the Royal Academy.
- She **exhibited every year from 1903 to her death in 1970 (67 years)** at the Royal Academy except for 1918 when she was ill and 1922 when she was in USA. Such exhibits at the RA totalled some 284 works plus a further 176 at her retrospective exhibition. **This number of works has not been exceeded by any other artist**.
- At the 1928 Summer Olympics in Amsterdam she won the **Silver Medal in Painting** for *Boxer* (1917).
- She was also an **author of three books**, two autobiographies and one on the circus; wrote a play for Sir Barry Jackson and **privately was a poet** (none of which have yet been published).

REFERENCES

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-last-act-92565>

True to Life catalogue, page 97

Laura Knight, *Oil Paint and Grease Paint*, page 309

Winifred Knights
(1899-1947), *The
Deluge*, 1920,
152.9 x 183.5 cm,
Tate



Winifred Knights (1899-1947), *The Deluge*, 1920, 152.9 x 183.5 cm, Tate

Displayed at Dulwich Picture Gallery, 8 June 2016 to 18 September 2016.

- Inspired by the **masterpieces of Italian Early Renaissance artists**, painstakingly exact in her working methods, and **even declared a genius**, Winifred Knights (1899-1947) is one of the most original, pioneering British artists of the first half of the 20th century. However, she produced little during the war and died in 1947.
- This painting was produced for the 1920 **Prix de Rome scholarship** which **she won despite intense competition** from other Slade School students and tonsillitis and eye problems during the eight weeks allowed for the task.
- Initially she planned a scene of figures and animals **entering Noah's ark** but this final design is more dramatic with **figures fleeing the flood**. The ark is a small windowless vessel in the background while in the foreground fleeing figures create a sense of dynamic movement that combines the frieze-like structure of fifteenth-century Italian painting with the energy of Futurism. *The Daily Graphic* (8

February 1921), **declared the painter a genius.**

- **Knights** herself appears as the **woman centre right** in the foreground and **her mother** modelled for the woman holding a baby. **Her friend** Arnold Mason (1885-1963) modelled for the man next to her and the crouching figure scaling the hill behind them.
- **Knights continued to paint religious subjects** for the rest of her life **like fellow artist Stanley Spencer** (1891-1959).

NOTES

- Knights worked with extreme attention to detail and all five of her major works were supported by numerous studies. There are nearly 120 studies for her five most famous works - *A Scene in a Village Street, with Mill Hands Conversing* (1919), *The Deluge* (1920), *The Marriage at Cana* (1923), *Santissima Trinita* (1924-30) and *Scenes From The Life of St Martin of Tours* (1928-1933).

BIO:KNIGHTS

- **Winifred Knights** (1899-1947) was born in **Streatham** and went to school in Dulwich where she showed artistic talent early on. She went to the **Slade** School of Art from 1915-17 and 1918-20 under Henry Tonks and Fred Brown.
- During World War One, Knights was **traumatised** after witnessing the **Silvertown explosion** at a TNT processing works in January 1917, which led to the break in her studies while she recuperated on the farm of her father's cousin.
- In 1920, she became the **first woman** in England to win the **prestigious Scholarship** in Decorative Painting awarded by the British School at Rome with her critically acclaimed painting ***The Deluge***. That year she became engaged to fellow student Arnold Mason and moved to Italy to complete her scholarship, living in

a small village south of Rome. The relationship with Mason ended and she married fellow Rome Scholar Thomas Monnington in 1924.

- On her return to England in 1926 she returned to the Slade for a year. In 1933 she worked on the decoration of Eltham Palace for Stephen Courtauld. She died of a brain tumour in 1947, aged 47.
- Her first major retrospective was at Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2016 and typical reviews were:
 - 'Spellbinding genius of a neglected artist' - The Telegraph, Five stars
 - 'The lost talent of Winifred Knights' - The Times
 - 'An intensely sensitive and compelling exhibition' - The Guardian
- Amongst her most notable works are *The Marriage at Cana* produced for the British School at Rome, which is now in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and her winning Rome Scholarship entry *The Deluge* which is now held by Tate Britain. Knights' style was much influenced by the Italian Quattrocento and she was one of several British artists who participated in a revival of religious imagery in the 1920s, while retaining some elements of a modernist style.

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True to Life catalogue, page 98

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20 MINUTE COFFEE BREAK



Fortunino Matania (1881-1963), *Blackpool*, c. 1937, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

Fortunino Matania (1881-1963), *Blackpool*, c. 1937, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

- Something about this is **very 1930s** although the **man looking out at us breaks the postcard convention**. It was **used as a poster** for Blackpool by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway.
- Fortunino Matania (pronounced 'forto-nino man-tan-ya') was an **Italian artist** who was born in Naples and is best known for his realistic painting of the trenches in WWI. He exhibited his **first work in Naples when he was 11** and was working producing book illustrations by the time he was 14. At the age of 20 he worked in Paris and was invited to London in 1902 to illustrate the coronation of Edward VII. He subsequently **illustrated every major royal event** up to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.
- He was best known at the time for his documentary painting of World War One.

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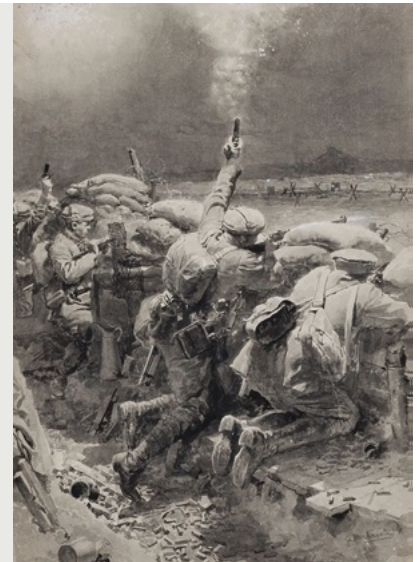
True to Life catalogue, page 102

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'The work of the Royal Army Medical Corps: First Aid in the trenches R.A.M.C. orderlies gathering the wounded in a British trench after a successful advance', March 6th, 1915, pen, brush, ink, grey wash and white heightening, *The Sphere*



'Keeping off a night attack', 25th Dec 1915, pen, brush, ink and grey wash, *The Sphere*

'The work of the Royal Army Medical Corps: First Aid in the trenches R.A.M.C. orderlies gathering the wounded in a British trench after a successful advance'. Pen, brush, ink, grey wash and white heightening. Inscribed verso: 'March 6th, 1915, pages 254-255'. Stamped: 'The Sphere'. Illustrated: *The Sphere*, London, 6th March, 1915, pp.254-5. 12x20.5 inches. Literature: Lucinda Gosling, *Goodbye, Old Man: Matania's Vision of the First World War*, History Press, 2014, Ill. p.53.

'Keeping off a night attack'. Pen, brush, ink and grey wash. Signed. Inscribed verso: '25th Dec 1915, page 327', stamped: 'The Sphere no.8(?1)3'. Illustrated: *The Sphere*, London, 25th December, 1915, p.327. Literature: Lucinda Gosling, *Goodbye, Old Man: Matania's Vision of the First World War*, History Press, 2014, Ill. p.131. 13.75x9.75 inches.

- In 1904, **Matania joined the staff of *The Sphere*** where some of his most famous work was to appear, including his **illustrations of the sinking of the *RMS Titanic*** in 1912. Around 1906 to 1910 he painted the life in the lobby of the Hotel Excelsior in Rome.
- At the outbreak of the First World War, **Matania became a war artist** and was acclaimed for his graphic and realistic images of

trench warfare. These are two of the many great war illustration he produced for *The Sphere* magazine (1915-1920). On the left is *The Work of the Royal Army Medical Corps* and on the right *Keeping off a Night Attack, 25th Dec 1915*.



Fortunino Matania (1881-1963), *Beheading of Holofernes by Judith*, 1929, watercolour, reproduced in *Britannia and Eve*

Fortunino Matania (1881-1963), *Beheading of Holofernes by Judith*, 1929, watercolour, reproduced in *Britannia and Eve*

(Fortunino Matania (1881-1963), *Bathing Beauty*, watercolour, 102.25 x 63 cm)

- This is another example of Judith and Holofernes. In this case we have a scantily clad Judith but without the blood and severed head we saw previously. Matania (pronounced 'man-tan-ya') shows the moment when Judith has made up her mind to behead Holofernes but before she does the deed.
- After his **acclaimed, realistic images of the trenches as a war artist in WWI** he switched to scenes of ancient life for the women's magazine *Britannia and Eve*. He filled his London studio with reproductions of Roman furniture, pored over history books for suitably lively subjects. He illustrated **Biblical scenes, Roman life, Greek mythology and scenes of everyday life in meticulous detail** and the public demanded that every illustration include a **nude or scantily clad woman**. "The public demanded it," says Matania. "If there was no nude, then the editor or I would get a shower of letters from readers asking politely why not." He was a standard

fixture in *Britannia and Eve* for 19 years.

- He was greatly **influenced by classical art**, probably nurtured by spending his early years near the **excavations at Pompeii**. He had the ability to look at a scene as through the camera's eye, capturing the people as in an instant in time. He usually started his work in one corner and completed each detail as he put it in.
- The artist had gained an international reputation for his minutely accurate reconstructions of historical scenes. He once received a cable from Cecil B de Mille in Hollywood "**Would Mr Matania please paint a suitable orgy**".[1]

NOTES

- The story is told in the *Book of Judith*. Judith, a beautiful widow, is able to enter the tent of Holofernes because of his desire for her. Holofernes was an Assyrian general who was about to destroy Judith's home, the city of Bethulia. Overcome with drink, he passes out and is decapitated by Judith; his head is taken away in a basket (often depicted as being carried by an elderly female servant). Early Christian images show a praying Virgin figure but Lucas Cranach the Elder (c. 1472-1553) shows her as a sexualised seducer-assassin. Giorgione shows her with a bare leg showing through a slit skirt associating eroticism with the image and by the Baroque period she has become more violent with Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi, 1571-1610) and Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c. 1656) showing the actual moment of the severing of his head.

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True to Life catalogue, page 102

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Dod Procter, *Morning*, 1926, 76.2 × 152.4 cm, Tate

Dod Procter, *Morning*, 1926, 76.2 × 152.4 cm, Tate

- This painting is called ***Morning*** and is by an artist called **Doris 'Dod' Procter**. I mentioned this pose earlier when I showed you Lancelot Myles Glasson *Repose* and the *Sleeping Ariadne* sculpture in the Vatican.
- In the 1920s she painted **many female figures** like this one; they were **simple and monumental**. The **power and solidity** of the figure is achieved by means of a **limited palette**, the use of **stone colours** and an emphasis on bringing out the volume of the figure through her use of **strong light and shadow**.
- The woman is lying on top of the sheets and seems to be wrapped in a sheet. She appears to be asleep, but from her pose she may be resting and daydreaming with her eyes closed.
- The Sunday Times critic wrote, '**Here is no artificial composition reeking of the studio, but a fragment of life, nobly seen and simply stated**'. I think what the critic meant was that it is **not artificially posed** like a typical studio portrait but, as I said, it is a **classical pose** and she has **manipulated the colour, form and lighting** to create a particular feeling of solidity and timelessness.

The Sunday Times critic went on to say it was '**a new vision of the human figure which amounts to the invention of a twentieth-century style in portraiture**'.

- It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1926 and was admired by the public and the press who described its '**sensuous but sombre style**'. It won the **Portrait of the Year award** and was bought by the *Daily Mail* and donated to the Tate, where we see it today. It was so highly regarded that it was sent to be exhibited in New York and then went on a two-year tour of Britain.
- We know who the model is. It is '**Cissie**' Barnes, the daughter of a local fisherman who received some publicity at the time. She modelled for other Newlyn artists and in 1926, when she was 16, she **posed almost every day for five weeks for this painting**. Five years later she married, and moved to London.
- I should also add that **other paintings by Dod Procter were controversial**. During the 1920s she painted many **female nudes including young girls** and when this worked toured the country it was accompanied by some of these other works. As a result, **some venues would not display her work** and three years later a painting of a young female nude called *Virginal* that she submitted to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition was **excluded on the grounds of indecency**.
- **Ernest Procter**, her man who was to become her husband, and her were **both star pupils at art college** and went together to Paris where they **both met Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne** and were influenced by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. However, like many women artists married to well-known male artists her work has **often defined in terms of her husband's art**.

NOTES

- The work reminds me of the term the '**male gaze**', invented in 1975 to describe the way in which women in works of art are often depicted objects of male pleasure. It is claimed the male gaze robs women of their human identity as it relegates to the status of objects. The three elements are the artist, the person represented and the viewer. In this case the artist is a woman which raises the possibility that this is an example of the female gaze. This is difficult to define but it has been suggested that involves transparency and the ability to connect with the person represented at a deeper level. So, the description of the painting as 'sensuous but sombre' might mean that although the sexual attractiveness of the model has been captured eroticism and objectification have been avoided.

BIO:PROCTER

- **Dod Procter** (1890-1972) was born Doris Margaret Shaw, the daughter a former art student at the Slade and her father was a ship's doctor. She was born in Hampstead, but the family moved to Cornwall when she was young. When she was 15 she joined the school of painting run by Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes in Newlyn where she met he future husband Ernest Procter. In Newlyn, she met Laura Knight who became a lifelong friend and influence. In 1910 she went with her mother and Ernest Procter to Paris where they met Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne. They married in Paris in 1912 and the following year their son was born, and she first exhibited at the Royal Academy. During WWI Ernest worked in an ambulance unit and after the war they settled in Newlyn. They were commissioned to go to China for a year to decorate a Palace and when she returned she started painting portraits usually of young women.
- Procter and her husband attended art schools in England and in Paris together, where they were both influenced by

Impressionism and the Post-Impressionism movements. They also worked together at times, sometimes sharing commissions and other times showing their work together in exhibitions. Procter was a lifelong artist, active after the untimely death of her husband in 1935. After Ernest's death, Procter travelled to the United States, Canada, Jamaica and Africa.

- Frank Rutter, the critic for the Sunday Times wrote at the time, 'Here is no artificial composition reeking of the studio, but a fragment of life, nobly seen and simply stated. ... It is Mrs. Dod Procter's "Morning"'. He explained that this 'noble painting of a sleeping girl is the outstanding 'picture of the year' so far as the Academy is concerned. ... How exquisite is the painting of that left hand, at rest but full of life'.
- She sold the work for £300 but could have achieved ten times that price. There is a smaller version called Early Morning in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.
- Her painting of Cissie Barnes was regarded as one of the best at the Royal Academy in 1925 and in 1927 this portrait of Barnes, called Morning, won Portrait of the Year. It was bought by the Daily Mail and donated to the Tate which sent it on a two-year tour of New York and Britain. She sold the work for £300 but could have achieved ten times that price. There is a smaller version called Early Morning in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.
- The model was Sarah ('Cissie') Barnes (1910-1979), born in Newlyn, Cornwall, the daughter of a fisherman or fish merchant. Her mother died when she was born, and she was brought up by maternal aunt and uncle. She modelled for other Newlyn artists and in 1926 she posed almost every day for five weeks for this painting. She married Francis Garner in 1931, the best man at her brother's wedding.
- The term male gaze was coined by feminist film critic and

academic Laura Mulvey in 1975.

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True to Life catalogue, page 118-119



Roger Fry (1866–1934), *Portrait of Nina Hamnett*, 1917, 82 × 61 cm, Courtauld Institute of Art



Nina Hamnett (1890-1956), *The Landlady*, 1918, private collection

Nina Hamnett (1890-1956), *The Landlady*, 1918, private collection
 Roger Fry (1866–1934), *Portrait of Nina Hamnett*, 1917, 82 × 61 cm, Courtauld Institute of Art

- **Nina Hamnett was a Welsh artist** who attended Pelham Art School (London) then the London School of Art. (CLICK) When she arrived in London it was paradise, it opened her eyes to modernism, **she met Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry who painted this portrait.** (CLICK).
- In 1914 she left for Paris and when she arrived in Montparnasse, on her first evening the smiling man at the next table at La Rotonde café introduced himself as "**Modigliani, painter and Jew**". They became good friends, Hamnett later recounting how she once borrowed a jersey and corduroy trousers from him, then went to La Rotonde and danced in the street all night.
- **Hamnett was flamboyantly unconventional**, and **openly bisexual**, and once **danced nude** on a Montparnasse café table **just for the "hell of it"**. She **drank heavily, was sexually promiscuous, and kept numerous lovers** and close associations within the artistic community. Very quickly, she became a well-known bohemian

personality throughout Paris and modelled for many artists. She became known as the '**Queen of Bohemia**'.

- **The Landlady painted in 1918 is perhaps her most striking portrait** her look has a certain tension and her direct look, dark brown eyes and frown lines suggest a deeper relationship.

NOTES

- **Nina Hamnett** (1890-1956) was a Welsh artist whose father was dishonourably discharged from the army and worked as a taxi driver. She attended Pelham Art School (London) then the London School of Art. When she arrived in London it was paradise, it opened her eyes to modernism, **she met Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell**. In 1914 she left for Paris married in Paris but although she remained married for 40 years the relationship only lasted three years. She became a **celebrated artist** in both London and Paris, exhibiting widely in solo and group shows, including those of The London Group and the New English Art Club throughout the 1910s to 1950s, and at both the Royal Academy and the Salon d'Automne in 1948. From mid-1920s and World War Two she lived in Fitzrovia, London's main Bohemian art centre. She was friends with Augustus John, who was from her home town of Tenby and Dylan Thomas. She became the main point of contact and exchange of ideas between the Bloomsbury Group, the Camden Town Group and Paris.
- In 1923 she published *Laughing Torso*, a tale of her bohemian life and it became a best seller in the UK and the US. She was unsuccessfully sued by the occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) because she claimed in the book he performed black magic. The case seemed to affect her psychologically for the rest of her life. She became an alcoholic and spend the last few decades of her life in bars, mostly the Fitzroy Tavern. She died in 1956 of

complications after falling from her apartment window. It may have been a drunken accident or suicide as her last words were "Why don't they let me die?".

- In 2021 her first ever retrospective was held at the Charleston Gallery near Lewes.
- **Virginia Bell** (1879-1961) married Clive Bell in 1907. She was the sister of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941, aged 59) and they were both members of the Bloomsbury Group. Virginia Bell had an affair with another member of the Group Roger Fry (1866-1934, painter and critic) and with the painter Duncan Grant. She had a daughter by Grant who was brought up by Clive Bell. Vanessa, Clive, Duncan Grant and Duncan's lover David Garnett moved to the Sussex countryside shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, and settled at Charleston Farmhouse near Firle, East Sussex. They worked on commissions from the Omega Workshop which had been set up by Roger Fry. Fry introduced modern art to Britain and set up the influential exhibition 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' in 1910-11.

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Stanley Spencer, *Adoration of Old Men*,
1937, 90.6 × 110.5 cm,
New Walk Museum & Art Gallery



Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Adoration of Old Men*, 1937, 90.6 × 110.5 cm, New Walk Museum & Art Gallery

- They were painted around the **time of his divorce to Hilda Carline in May 1937** and his **disastrous marriage to Patricia Preece** just a week later. Spencer said that he would have preferred to be married to both of them.
- Of this painting Spencer said, "**I am the girls and I have imagined a girl who is supposed to be me and have my feelings sexually. The thing that is prompting their awe is the joy of the thought of going to bed with any of them [i.e. the old men]**".
- Several of the old men are **loosely based on his father William Spencer**, who the family called 'Pa'. His father was passionate about music and made a precarious living teaching music and playing the organ in church. His family of eight children lived in Cookham so are sometimes regarded as 'country-folk'. This was not true as it was an intellectual family that produced a knight, two professors, a concert violinist, a well-known professional magician, the Director of the National Building Institute, an Oxford graduate killed in the First World War, and the wife of a Cambridge don.

BIO:SPENCER

1. Spencer's Early Life, 1891 to 1914

- 1891, A crow fell down the chimney at Fernlea on Cookham High Street, flapped around the room, flew out of the window and Stanley Spencer was born. The date was June 30th 1891 - and the family thought it was a good omen. He was the eighth surviving child of Annie and William Spencer, a piano teacher, and he was joined a year later by his younger brother Gilbert. This is a picture of the house today and this is how the High Street looked in the 1880s. The Kings Arms Hotel is four houses away from Fernlea.
- 1891-1907, his father did not think the local school was satisfactory and could not afford a private school so Spencer was educated by his sisters Annie and Florence in the shed at the bottom of the garden next door but as Spencer did not like school work so they allowed him to draw instead. Painting was not an important subject for the Spencer family but there were a number of reproductions on the walls and when he was old enough his mother took him to the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy.
- 1907, Spencer was stimulated by reading from the family bible and enjoyed taking long, solitary walks. He spent time drawing with the wife of a local landowner, Lady Boston who, in 1907, arranged for him to go to Maidenhead Technical Institute.
- 1908-12 he studied at the Slade under Henry Tonks. Contemporaries included Christopher Nevinson, David Bomberg, and Paul Nash. 1912 he exhibited John Donne Arriving in Heaven at Roger Fry's Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. He was considered to be influenced by Gauguin. However, he was more influenced by Giotto and Mantegna and when asked what he thought of Picasso he said 'I haven't got past Piero della Francesca yet'. Paul Nash called him 'the last of

the Pre-Raphaelites’.

2. World War One, 1914 to 1918

- 1915-18 he attended the Slade School of Art between 1908 and 1912 and so his career started at the same time as the First World War. During the war his poor physique caused him to apply for ambulance duties. He enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corp and was sent to Bristol and later Macedonia. He requested a transfer to the infantry in 1917.
- 1918, he returned to Cookham in December 1918 to hear his brother Sydney had been killed in action three months previously and he lost ‘the all pervading joy I felt as a child’ and the ‘serenity of spirit’. His much loved brother had been killed in the last few weeks of the war and returning to the work after the war he found it difficult to continue, often stating "It is not proper or sensible to expect to paint after such experience." Many artists felt the same and although in Europe some artists reacted against the slaughter by rejecting all social, cultural and artistic standards in Britain and among many artists in Europe there was what has been called a "return to order". The excesses of modernism we rejected and there was a return to more conventional figurative painting. Cubism was partially abandoned even by its creators, Braque and Picasso, and Futurism, which had praised machinery, violence and war, was rejected by most of its adherents. The return to order was associated with a revival of classicism and realistic painting.

3. 1920 to 1927, The Resurrection, Cookham

- 1919 lived and worked at Cookham. He became a member New English Art Club until 1927.
- 1920-21 he lodged with Henry Slessor and his wife at Bourne End near Cookham.
- 1922 he accompanied the Carline family on a holiday to

Yugoslavia, became engaged to Hilda Carline and moved to Hampstead.

- **1925 married Anne Hilda Carline** and had two daughters Shirin (1925) and Unity (1930). When he first met Hilda he became a changed man in his own words the old Stanley Spencer 'was now no longer so' and the new 'lust or what you will was sweeping me along'.
- 1926 completed ***The Resurrection***, one of his '**major, most memorable achievements**'. The Times critic would call it 'the most important picture painted by any English artist during the present century ... What makes it so astonishing is the combination in it of careful detail with modern freedom in the treatment of form. It is as if a Pre-Raphaelite had shaken hands with a Cubist.'

4. The Sandham Memorial Chapel. Burghclere, 1926-32 (National Trust)

- 1927 Spencer received commissions including the Sandham Memorial Chapel (1927-1932). It was in 1927 that he held his first one-man exhibition at the Goupil Gallery. The centre piece of the exhibition was *The Resurrection*, Cookham.

5. Cookham, 1932-1935, The Church House Project

- 1932 moved to 'Lindworth', a large house in Cookham. Began work on 'Church-House' idea. Elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. Dudley Tooth became his sole agent.

6. Divorce and Remarriage, 1935-1938

- 1935 resigned from the Royal Academy after the rejection of *The Dustman* and other works from the Summer Exhibition and the controversy resulted in his popularity declining.
- **1937 he was divorced by his wife Hilda Carline and immediately married Patricia Preece.** His second marriage was a disaster, never consummated and his wife manipulated and

exploited him. Spencer tried to win back Hilda but never succeeded. He began work on the Beatitudes of Love series.

- 1938 in financial difficulties, left Cookham and went to stay with the Rothensteins in London. Dudley Tooth took over managing his business affairs. Began Christ in the Wilderness series in bed-sit in Swiss Cottage.

7. Port Glasgow, World War Two, 1935-1945

- 1939-41 stayed at the White Hart Inn, Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, with George and Daphne Charlton. In March 1940 the War Artists Advisory Committee commissioned Spencer to paint the Port Glasgow shipyards, which occupied him until 1946. Went to live in Epsom with his children and then moved back to Cookham.

8. Resurrection Pictures, 1945-1950

- 1945 began The Resurrection, Port Glasgow series (1945-1950). His reputation improved as a result of his war commissions
- 1950 Alfred Munnings, the President of the Royal Academy, initiated a prosecution against Spencer for obscenity but Munnings then resigned and the new President persuaded Spencer to re-join the RA. Hilda died of breast cancer in November. This followed years of mental health problems during which Spencer visited her weekly and sent long letters, some of over one hundred pages. He continued to send letters after her death.

9. Final Years, 1951 to 1959

- 1954 he visited China as a guest of the Chinese authorities.
- 1955 there was a retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery.
- 1959 knighted. Died of bowel cancer on 14 December aged 58 at the Canadian War Memorial Hospital, Cliveden, Berkshire. His last years until his death in 1959 were financially successful although his reputation and his sale prices did not soar until after

his death.

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<http://www.stanleypencer.co.uk/index.htm>



Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Adoration of Young Girls*, c. 1938, 92 cm x 136 cm, Peter Nahun, Leicester Galleries

Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Adoration of Young Girls*, c. 1938, 92 cm x 136 cm, Peter Nahun, Leicester Galleries

- Spencer worked on the picture, then called *Girls being Adored by Men*, in the autumn of 1937 before painting *Adoration of Old Men*.
- Spencer explained: "**The picture is still the Day of Judgement** and the two parties are judging and adoring each other, but it's **the girls' turn** to stand in a group as one would to be photographed, only here it is for the purpose of **being worshipped** ... the old man down on the left who is helping the young man to make love... (by) grasping the woman's arm he becomes aware of the mystery (of sexual love)" (Tate archives)
- **Spencer's dream was to be able to indulge in promiscuous sexual relations with young girls and women.** His vision of the Last Judgement which translated into these **scenes of everyday life**, coupled with his **unorthodox views on sex and love**, brought him into conflict with the establishment of the day.

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Mark Lancelot Symons (1887-1935), *My Lord I Meet in Every London Lane and Street*, 1931, 144.8 x 205.8 cm, private collection



Mark Lancelot Symons (1887-1935), *My Lord I Meet in Every London Lane and Street*, 1931, 144.8 x 205.8 cm, private collection. Sold at Bonhams 2015 for £ 30,000 inc. premium

- **Like Stanley Spencer, Symons painted religious events taking place in modern dress** and in contemporary settings. They both believed that the Kingdom of God is already present on Earth if only we could see it. In this picture **Jesus in the centre** is preaching to a small crowd of **mostly men** although he seems to be **looking at two women** directly in front of him. On the **left a man has collapsed** and a woman appears to be **begging Jesus to intervene**. People are looking or going about their **normal business**. There is a group of what appears to be **schoolgirls in the background** but their dresses are brightly coloured and **too short for the early 1930s**. In the **sky there are angels** and an Alpha-to-Omega sign from God.
- Many of the faces were based on **friends and acquaintances** — he even **used himself for Judas Iscariot**. His pictures proved **highly controversial**, attracting crowds of viewers, but also being **rejected by the jury of the RA on three occasions**.

BIO:SYMONS

- **Mark Lancelot Symons** (1887-1935) was born in Hampstead, London, and brought up in Sussex. His father was the artist William Christian Symons, who counted the celebrated painters James Abbott McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent among his close friends. The family was staunchly Roman Catholic.
- Symons **studied at the Slade** School of Fine Art from 1905 to 1909. On leaving he **decided he wanted to join the priesthood**, although ill health prevented him from doing so. He worked for the Catholic Evidence Guild from 1918 to 1924. He disseminated literature in the streets of London and preached at Hyde Park Corner. He continued to paint sporadically, exhibiting occasionally at the RA from 1913.
- In 1924, he married Constance Gerber, who **encouraged him to return to painting**. They moved to the Reading area, and for the last decade of his life he showed regularly at the RA.
- He died of a brain tumour at his home in Barkham, near Wokingham, February 1935, aged forty-eight. A number of his paintings belong to Reading Museum.
- Symons's eccentric and highly individual symbolist paintings can be seen as a late flowering of the Pre-Raphaelite style. (*True to Life*, p. 120)
- *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* aroused intense interest and debate when shown at the 1930 RA exhibition.

NOTES

- Sold at Bonhams on 10 June 2015 for £30,000.
- The title was taken from the 1893 poem 'The Second Crucifixion' by the English author Richard Le Gallienne. The poem provides an exposition of the painting; it contrasts Christ's presence to the faithful author with the sins of modern humanity that repeat the Crucifixion.

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Mark Lancelot Symons
(1887-1935), *A Fairy Tale*,
c. 1925-35, Newport Art
Gallery



Mark Lancelot Symons (1887-1935), *A Fairy Tale*, c. 1925-35, Newport Art Gallery, Wales

- Some of his paintings seem to have been **influenced by Richard Dadd** (1817-1886) and this one possibly by the **Victorian fairy painter Joseph Noel Paton**. It was exhibited at the 1935 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition **shortly after his death** and bought by Newport Art Gallery, Wales.
- He was never really committed to paintings, **he sought a religious life** and after failing to become a monk he considered becoming an unordained minister. It was **his wife who encouraged him to paint**.
- His paintings were **often controversial** not because of the naked children but because he set religious scenes in the modern world. Although the public were easily offended by his work his use of naked children caused no objections.
- In this painting we see a young girl asleep on a bed of ivy on some architectural stonework and she is surrounded by **distorted young children** climbing through honeysuckle. It is unclear whether it is a **pleasant dream or a nightmare** or if there is some religious significance.

NOTES

- **Richard Dadd** (1 August 1817 – 7 January 1886) was an English painter of the Victorian era, noted for his depictions of fairies and other supernatural subjects, Orientalist scenes, and enigmatic genre scenes, rendered with obsessively minuscule detail¹². He is known for his works created while he was a patient in Bethlem psychiatric hospital³.

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Edward Baird (1904-1949), *The Birth of Venus*, 1934, 51 × 69 cm, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

- **Edward Baird** painted this as a **wedding present** for the artist James McIntosh Patrick and his wife Janet. He was the **best man** at the wedding and selected this **sentimental subject, Venus**, the goddess of love. The painting is a **rare example of Scottish Surrealism** and arose out of **his love of Botticelli** (*The Birth of Venus*, 1484-6, in particular), the wedding and his love of boats. (The pose is similar to the figure in *The Renaissance of Venus*, 1877 by Walter Crane.) The dark apparatus at the **top left is a sextant**, which used to be used to navigate out of sight of land. The **beach is at Montrose, Angus**, Scotland where the artist was born.
- The model is the **artist's fiancée Ann Fairweather** who has dark hair but has been turned into a platinum blonde to **disguise her identity**.
- Baird went to the **Glasgow School of Art** where he became a close friend of James McIntosh Patrick the person he gave this painting to as a wedding present. In 1927 he was **awarded a prize as the top student of the year**. His technique involves **hours spent on**

meticulous detail to the extent that **only thirty finished oils** by him are recorded. He also constantly reworked his paintings which he rarely regarded as finished. In **1928 he went to Italy**, his only trip abroad and the following year he returned to Montrose where he spent the rest of his life. He suffered from **chronic asthma**, another reason for his small output. He lived with his mother until he was 41 when he married and he died in 1949 when he was just 44.

REFERENCES

True to Life catalogue, page 59

Stanley Lewis (1905-2009),
The Welsh Mole-Catcher,
1937, 98 × 73.2 cm, Newport
Museum and Art Gallery



Stanley Cornwell Lewis (1905-2009), *The Welsh Mole-Catcher*, 1937, 98 × 73.2 cm, Newport Museum and Art Gallery

- Lewis grew up in Wales and studied at the Newport College of Art before moving to the Royal College of Art in London. He first exhibited at the **Royal Academy in 1932** and exhibited *The Welsh Mole-Catcher* in 1937 when it was **voted the most popular painting in the exhibition**. It was so widely reproduced in the press that it was lampooned by *Punch*. This is a very good example of what is known as the 'hard edge' technique where the objects have sharp, clear edges. It is often applied to abstract painting with areas of intense bold colour with hard edges.
- He exhibited ten paintings at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition between 1932 and 1961 and was awarded an MBE in 2006.
- His father was a farmer and this is a portrait of a farmworker from the family farm.

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Herbert James Gunn (1893-1964),
Pauline in a Yellow Dress, 1944, 150
× 120 cm, Harris Museum and Art
Gallery, Preston



Herbert James Gunn (1893-1964), *Pauline in a Yellow Dress*, 1944, 150 × 120 cm, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston

- This painting caused a sensation when exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1944 and was bought by Preston Art Gallery for £1,000.
- "**Pauline was the artist's wife.** Her glamour and enigmatic smile caused a sensation when the portrait was first exhibited in London. The Daily Mail described it as the '**Mona Lisa of 1944**'. Gunn was **Britain's foremost portrait painter of his time.** Amongst his sitters were two kings and three prime ministers, but he painted Pauline many times."
- **Herbert James Gunn** (1893-1964) was a Scottish landscape and portrait painter who studied for several years at the Glasgow School of Art and the Edinburgh College of Art. In 1911, he went to the Académie Julian in Paris where he studied under Jean-Paul Laurens. He began as a landscape painter and traveled widely, exhibiting Paintings of Rome etc at the Fine Art Society in 1929. During the 1920s, he increasingly concentrated on portrait painting and after 1929 he devoted himself exclusively to portraits⁸. He was elected an Associate of the RA, 1953, and RA, 1961, RSW, 1930 and was also

President of the Society of Portrait Painters⁹. He painted the State Portrait of HM Queen Elizabeth II in her 1953 coronation robes and was knighted in 1963⁹.

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Cecil Beaton,
Queen Elizabeth II's
coronation portrait,
Victoria and Albert
Museum



Herbert James Gunn
(1893-1964), *Queen
Elizabeth II (1926-2022)
in Coronation Robes*, c.
1953-56, 244.5 x 152.9
cm, Royal Collection

Herbert James Gunn (1893-1964), *Queen Elizabeth II (1926-2022) in Coronation Robes*, c. 1953-56, 244.5 x 152.9 cm, Royal Collection

Cecil Beaton, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation portrait, Victoria and Albert Museum

- This is Elizabeth II in her coronation robes. It was painted by Herbert Gunn in 1953 ten years before he was knighted. It took three years to paint, is nearly two and a half metres tall and could be described as photographic in its detail. The dress was designed by Norman Hartnell and he placed a shamrock where her hand rested without asking her permission.
- (CLICK) For comparison this is a famous coronation photograph by Cecil Beaton, it could be described as more painterly than the painting.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_James_Gunn

James Walker Tucker (1898-1972),
Hiking, c.1936, 51.2 × 60.3 cm, Laing
Art Gallery, Newcastle



James Walker Tucker (1898-1972), *Hiking*, c.1936, 51.2 × 60.3 cm, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle

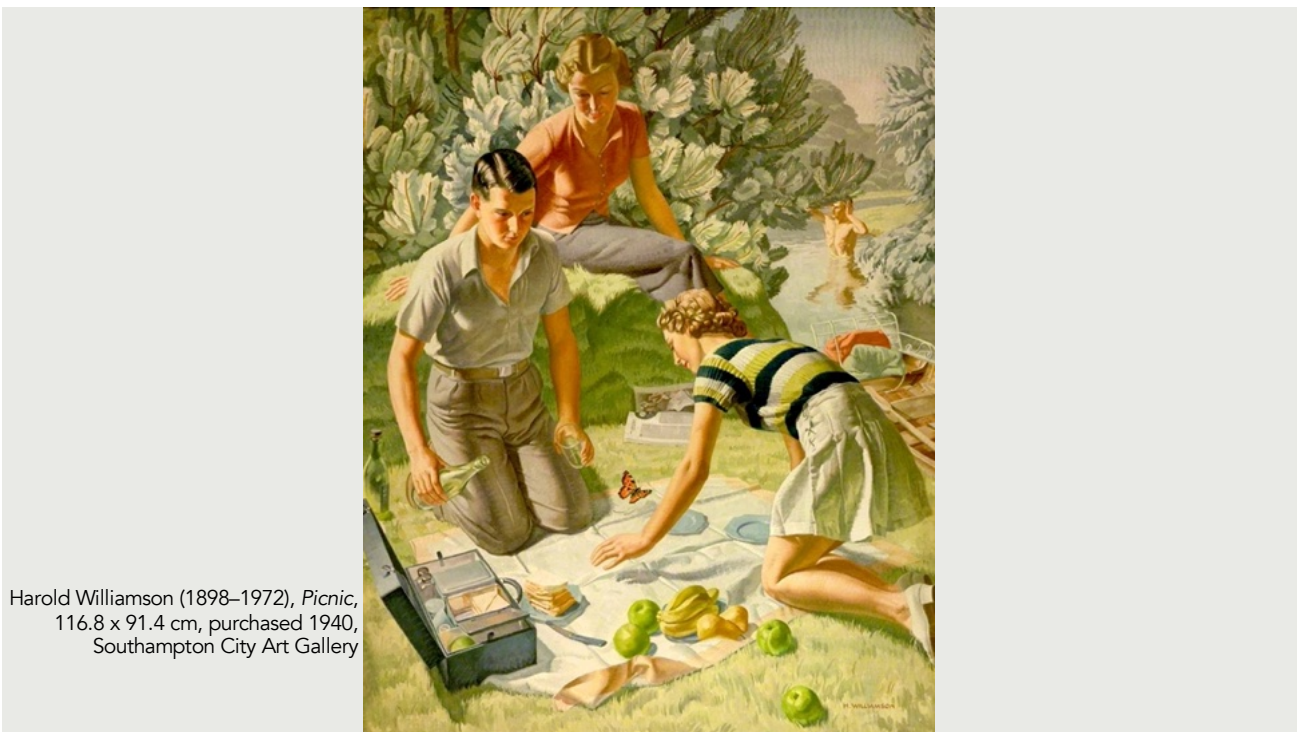
- **After the First World War the Government was keen to improve the health of the nation** and organisations such as the **Sunlight League** and the **New Health Society** were formed. **Exercise and sunbathing became popular** and **mandatory holiday allowance** was put into law.
- **The Girl Guides were formed** in 1910 and by the 1930s it had spread across the world. Three young women are out hiking and have stopped to examine a map. One critic (*The Gloucestershire Echo*, 2 May, 1936) wrote "**This work has a vividness and freshness that is most impressive**".
- It was bought directly Tucker by the **Laing Gallery in Newcastle** who lent it to be exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1936.
- **Tucker** was born in Wallsend, Newcastle and studied art in the city followed by the Royal College of Art from 1922 to 1927. He was taught by William Rothenstein and became his assistant and he won a travelling scholarship to Italy. On his return he became Head of Drawing and Painting at Gloucester College of Art where he

remained until his retirement 32 years later in 1963.

REFERENCES

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/hiking-36495>

True to Life catalogue, page 132



Harold Williamson (1898–1972), *Picnic*, 1938, 116.8 x 91.4 cm, purchased 1940, Southampton City Art Gallery

- *Picnic* was exhibited at the RA in 1938. The **idyllic scene presents two couples** (the second man is in the background, bathing) They seem to have arrived by the **boat, moored** beside them on the river. **Widening car ownership, statutory holidays** (the Holidays With Pay Act of 1938 gave workers the right to one week's statutory holiday) and **increased leisure time made picnics a very popular** middle-class pastime in the 1930s.
- I think it is a **Large Tortoiseshell butterfly**, which was once widespread across Britain but declined to extinction by the 1960s.
- **Hilda Leyel's classic book *The Perfect Picnic***, published in 1936, responded to the vogue for picnics, and details the kinds of food (she recommends **egg mayonnaise sandwiches**) and drink that might be taken on a trip." (*True to Life* catalogue, p. 135)

NOTES

- *The Perfect Picnic* begins "**There are many people with cars who make a regular habit of spending Saturday or Sunday in the**

country—with a hamper of food they are independent of hotels and can eat their meals in any part of the country they choose." She recommends "curries, ragoûts and other casseroled dishes ... served steaming hot" from a thermos flask. The **vacuum flask** was invented by James Dewar in 1892 and became a commercial product in **1902 branded a Thermos** flask. By the 1930s they were widely available and popular.

- Skirt hemlines rose in the 1920s until they reach just below the knee but they **lowered again** to the ankle in the 1930s. Tennis skirts were shorter and although many were below the knee a few were above the knee. Hiking shorts were much shorter.

BIO:WILLIAMSON

- Harold Williamson (1898-1972) was **born in Manchester** and attended **Manchester School of Art** immediately before and after the First World War and **taught there from 1922**. He designed fabric and wallpaper for Arthur Sanderson & Sons. He taught at **Bournemouth College of Art from 1926 to 1947**, living at Richmond Park Road. He then returned to Manchester School of Art where he was **Head of Fine Art from 1947 to 1962**. He **exhibited at the RA** and the NEAC. He retired to Sale, Cheshire. When he lived in Bournemouth, beach scenes feature in his repertoire: in 1933 he showed *On the Sands* at the RA and in 1937, *Pony Ride* (in tempera). There was a retrospective exhibition at the Belgrave Gallery, London, in 1979. Little known and barely studied, he is sometimes confused with the artist Harold Sandys Williamson (1892 1978), from Leeds, who worked at about the same time and in a comparable style.

REFERENCES

True to Life catalogue, page 135



Harold Williamson
(1898–1972), *Spray*,
1939, 60.5 × 85.8 cm,
Russell-Cotes Art
Gallery & Museum

Harold Williamson (1898–1972), *Spray*, 1939, 60.5 × 85.8 cm, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum

- His most famous work and a well-known image of the period. **Exhibited at the RA in 1940**, this was bought by the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery, Bournemouth, for £50.
- **Before 1930, swimming suits** were usually made from cotton or wool and were baggy. In the 1920s Dunlop developed a **new material, Lastex**, which was an **elastic material made of rubber thread** covered with rayon, cotton, silk or nylon. Patented in 1931, Lastex was used in many garments, particularly swimwear. Costumes became smaller (and **sometimes two-piece**), often featured **cut-out sections** and **low backs** and **hugged the contours** of the body. (*True to Life* catalogue, p. 136)
- So, this painting represents **technology, fashion and modernity** in the context of holidays, fun and excitement.

REFERENCES

True to Life catalogue, page 136

Algernon Newton (1880-1968), *The Surrey Canal, Camberwell*, 1935,
71.8 × 91.4 cm, Tate



Algernon Newton (1880-1968), *The Surrey Canal, Camberwell*, 1935,
71.8 × 91.4 cm, Tate, purchased 1940

- I left this painting till last as it is a **beautiful close of day** and I thought an **appropriate end to the interwar British Realist painters**.
- Algernon Newton was born in Hampstead and was the grandson of Henry Newton one of the founders of the art suppliers **Winsor & Newton**. He served in the **Royal Navy and the Army** in the First World War and then started **exhibiting at the Royal Academy** and New English Art Club and in the US. In 1943 he became an **Academician**.
- This is typical of his work, he was known as the '**Canaletto of the canals**'.
- He painted back-street views of canals with a curiously uninhabited look. He once wrote: '**There is beauty to be found in everything, you only have to search for it; a gasometer can make as beautiful a picture as a palace on the Grand Canal, Venice. It simply depends on the artist's vision.**'

NOTES

- In 1801 a **40-feet wide canal** was built from **Surrey Quays to Peckham** to bring timber and concrete to the construction industry in Peckham. In 1974 the canal had long been disused and was filled in. It is now a green corridor between Peckham and Burgess Park, Camberwell.

BIO:NEWTON

Algernon Newton (1880-1968) was born in Hampstead, the last of eight children of a prosperous family. He was the grandson of the founder of Winsor & Newton art suppliers and many family members were artists. He enrolled at Clare College, Cambridge but left after a year and studied at the School of Animal Painting in London. He also studied part-time at the Slade and the London School of Art under Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) until 1906. He married in 1903 and they had four children. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1903 but was not a regular exhibitor until the 1920s. In the First World War he joined the army but was invalided out and he settled in London and divorced in 1921 and remarried. In the early 1920s, having studied Canaletto he began to use old-fashioned glazing techniques and very fine brushwork. He specialised in suburban streets and canals and his scenes are eerily empty of people. He won many admirers and his work was collected. He had solo exhibitions in 1931 and 1933 and became an ARA in 1936 and RA in 1943. He lived in Suffolk from 1938-40 and then Yorkshire until 1946 when he settled in Notting Hill, London. A retrospective was held in 1980.

REFERENCES

True to Life catalogue, page

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algernon_Newton

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/newton-the-surrey-canal-camberwell-n05343>



BRITISH REALISTS IN THE 1920s & 30s

QUESTIONS

- And that brings us to an end. So many artists, so many approaches. It is an interesting and forgotten period in British art and I hope you have been inspired to find out more.
- As always there are full PDF notes of all my talks and every image I have shown you. Just type shafe.uk into Google. Thank you.