

QUEER BRITISH ART 1861–1967

5 April – 1 October 2017

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 1 CODED DESIRES

Please return to holder

Introduction

For me, to use the word 'queer' is a liberation;
it was a word that frightened me, but no longer.

Derek Jarman

Queer British Art 1861–1967 explores connections between art and a wide range of sexualities and gender identities in a period of dynamic change. The exhibition begins in 1861 when the death penalty for sodomy was abolished and ends in 1967 with the partial decriminalisation of sex between men. Legal persecution affected many, yet for some, this was a time of liberation – of people finding themselves, identifying each other and building communities.

Terms such as 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual' and 'trans' were not widely recognised for much of this period and would have been unknown to many of the artists and audiences whose perspectives we explore. Often their approaches do not fall easily into these categories. We have used the broader term 'queer' to avoid imposing more specific identity labels.

Much material has been lost or destroyed – this is a history punctuated by bonfires and dustbins. Queer experience is diverse and there are some perspectives for which we have found little surviving material. This is not a definitive selection of queer British artworks. Rather, we hope this exhibition will be part of a bigger conversation that will encourage more material, more stories and more lives to be discovered.

ROOM 1

CODED DESIRES

In spite of the Victorian era's prudish reputation, there are many possible traces of transgressive desire in its art – in Frederic Leighton's sensuous male nudes, for instance, or Evelyn De Morgan's depictions of Jane Hales. Simeon Solomon attracted sustained criticisms of 'unwholesomeness' or 'effeminacy' – terms which suggest disapproval of alternative forms of masculinity as much as same-sex desire. Yet other works which might look queer to us passed without comment.

The death penalty for sodomy was abolished in 1861 but it was still punishable with imprisonment. Sex between women was not illegal and society sometimes tolerated such relationships. Yet for most people, there seems to have been little sense that certain sexual practices or forms of gender expression reflected a core aspect of the self. Instead, this was a world of fluid possibilities.

These ambiguities offered scope for artists to produce work that was open to homoerotic interpretation. Queer subcultures developed: new scholarship on same-sex desire in Renaissance Italy and ancient Greece allowed artists to use these civilisations as reference points, while the beautiful youths in Wilhelm von Gloeden's photographs attracted communities of collectors. As long as there was no public suggestion that artists had acted on their desires, there was much that could be explored and expressed.

Work labels

Anti-clockwise from wall text

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

Self-Portrait

1859

Graphite on paper

N03410

This delicate self-portrait is by Simeon Solomon, an artist who explored themes of sexual ambiguity and same-sex desire in much of his work. He met Dante Gabriel Rossetti and was introduced to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, becoming close friends with Edward Burne-Jones and poet critic Algernon Charles Swinburne. His drawings were much admired and he exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1858 onwards. In 1873 he was arrested in a public urinal with George Roberts, a stableman, and was convicted of attempted buggery and fined. Many friends abandoned him. He died in St Giles Workhouse on 14 August 1905 at the age of 65.

Tate. Presented anonymously 1919

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

The Bride, Bridegroom and Sad Love

1865

Ink on paper

X00685

This work was inspired by a passage from the Gospel of St John which tells how 'the friend of the bridegroom... rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice'. In Solomon's drawing, the friend of the bridegroom has the wings of love but his downcast expression identifies him as 'sad love', forever excluded. The positioning of his and the bridegroom's hands hints at the reason for his grief, implying that they are former sexual partners. He is forced to look on as his lover enters a heterosexual marriage: a fate shared by many men in same-sex relationships in this period.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

Babylon hath been a Golden Cup

1859

Ink and graphite on paper

X00546

Solomon was Jewish and many of his earliest drawings engage with religious themes. This example was exhibited in London at the French Gallery's 1839 **Winter Exhibition**. The work illustrates a passage from The Book of Jerimiah, lamenting: 'Babylon hath been a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, which hath made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.' Any moral seems absent from Solomon's design, which depicts a hedonistic scene of decadent excess. Dancers cavort behind the bearded ruler, who leans against an ambiguously gendered harpist. Such androgyny is typical of Solomon's work.

Lent by Birmingham Museums Trust on behalf of
Birmingham City Council

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

Bacchus

1867

Oil paint on paper on canvas

X63134

The classical god of wine, Bacchus also embodies sexual ambiguity and gender fluidity. While grapes and vine leaves identify the god in Solomon's painting, Bacchus's full lips, luxuriant hair and enigmatic gaze hint at his elusive sexuality. When it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1867, the critic of **The Art Journal** thought the figure looked effeminate, commenting 'Bacchus is a sentimentalist of rather weak constitution; he drinks mead, possibly sugar and water, certainly not wine'. Solomon's friend, critic Walter Pater wrote a favourable essay about the painting and poet Algernon Charles Swinburne said he found in Solomon and Bacchus alike, 'the stamp of sorrow; of perplexities unsolved and desires unsatisfied.'

Lent by Birmingham Museums Trust on
behalf of Birmingham City Council

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene

1864

Watercolour on paper

T03063

This strikingly frank image shows the ancient Greek poet Sappho in a passionate embrace with her fellow poet Erinna. Sappho is associated with the Island of Lesbos and her story gives us the word 'lesbian'. There was a surge of interest in Sappho's achievements and desires from the 1840s onwards. Solomon may be responding to his friend Algernon Charles Swinburne's poem **Anactoria** which includes Erinna amongst Sappho's lovers. While female same-sex desire was considered more acceptable than its male equivalent, Solomon's depiction of Sappho's fervent kiss and Erinna's swooning response is unusually explicit and the image was not publically exhibited.

Tate. Purchased 1980

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

The Moon and Sleep

1894

Oil paint on canvas

T01719

Made a few years after Solomon's arrest and social ostracisation, this painting depicts the love of the moon goddess Selene for Endymion, who, in one version of the myth, is given eternal youth and eternal sleep by Zeus. While it ostensibly depicts a heterosexual pairing, the striking similarity of the profiles of the figures in Solomon's painting gives them both an air of androgyny. This painting was given to Tate by a descendent of Rachel Simmons, Solomon's first cousin, who helped to support him after his fall from public favour by regularly buying his works for small sums of money.

Tate. Presented by Miss Margery Abrahams in memory of
Dr Bertram L. Abrahams and Jane Abrahams 1973

Simeon Solomon 1840–1905

Corruptio Optimi Pessima: Medusa

c.1890s

Chalk on paper

X63293

This anguished drawing is one of a series of images of Medusa that Solomon made towards the end of his career. The titles of some of the other works in the series embody their sense of inner turmoil: **The Tormented Conscience** 1889, **The Sleep of Remorse** 1886 and, in this example, **Corruptio Optimi Pessima**. which can be translated as 'The corruption of the best is the worst of all'. The use of 'optimi' rather than 'optimae' in the Latin inscription reveals that the Medusa, traditionally a woman, is here masculine.

Sidney Harold Meteyard 1868–1947

Hope Comforting Love in Bondage

Exhibited 1901

Oil paint on canvas

X64042

Hope is depicted as a respectably fully-clothed matron, whereas Love's only costume is his elaborate cloth bindings and the rose briars that are delicately threaded through the feathers of his wings. The flowers and thorns of the roses hint at pleasures and pains combined. Love's pensive expression and androgynous beauty is reminiscent of the work of Simeon Solomon and, while Hope stretches out her hand to comfort him, his gaze is fixed elsewhere, leaving the object of his affections undefined.

Lent by Birmingham Museums Trust on
behalf of Birmingham City Council

Evelyn De Morgan 1855–1919

Aurora Triumphans

1877–8

Oil paint on canvas

X63884

Aurora, goddess of the dawn, is shown here gently disentangling herself from the bonds of Night, depicted as a woman covertly departing in a swirl of dark drapery. Evelyn De Morgan's model for Aurora was Jane Hales, who was originally her sister's nursemaid. De Morgan's repeated images of Hales – often depicted nude – have encouraged speculation on the nature of their relationship. In this period, same-sex relationships between women were not always regarded as incompatible with heterosexual marriage. Whatever the truth, Hales was a much-loved member of the household and was buried next to Evelyn and Evelyn's husband, the ceramicist William De Morgan.

Lent by the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum,
Bournemouth (BORG 00665)

Frederic Leighton 1830–1896

Daedalus and Icarus

Exhibited 1869

Oil paint on canvas

X63246

In a story from the Roman poet Ovid's **Metamorphoses**, Daedalus made wings for his son Icarus to escape from Rhodes. Icarus's golden beauty is here contrasted with his weather-beaten father. When the work was exhibited at the Royal Academy **Summer Exhibition** in 1869, **The Times** anxiously remarked that Icarus had the air of 'a maiden rather than a youth' and exhibited 'the soft rounded contour of a feminine breast'. This response may reflect increasing concern amongst educated circles about the pairings of older men and adolescent youths in books such as Plato's **Symposium**, as new scholarship explored the eroticism of the original texts.

Private collection

Henry Scott Tuke 1858–1929

A Bathing Group

1914

Oil paint on canvas

X63142

While Henry Scott Tuke used the professional model Nicola Lucciani for this painting, it is similar to his images of Cornish youths in its frank appreciation of the male nude. Lucciani's torso is illuminated by a shaft of sunlight and he looks towards the second figure, who crouches as if in awe of his godlike beauty. Tuke presented the painting to the Royal Academy on his election as a member. Tuke used professional models when he first moved to Cornwall, but he soon befriended some of the local fishermen and swimmers in Falmouth who modelled for him in many paintings.

Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

Henry Scott Tuke 1858–1929

The Critics

1927

Oil paint on board

X63303

Made just two years before Tuke's death, **The Critics** is one of a number of works by Henry Scott Tuke depicting young men bathing off the Cornish coast. There has been much speculation about his relationships with his Cornish models although nothing has been substantiated. It is, however, not difficult to find a homoerotic undercurrent in this painting, as the two men on the shore appraise the swimming technique – and possibly the physique – of the youth in the water. Writer John Addington Symonds was a frequent visitor and he encouraged Tuke in his painting of male nudes in a natural outdoor setting.

Courtesy of Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum
(Warwick District Council)

Henry Scott Tuke 1858–1929

July Sun

1913

Oil paint on canvas

X63143

The model for **July Sun** was artists' model Nicola Lucciani, an Italian who Tuke brought down from London to paint. Tuke also used him as a model for **A Bathing Group**, shown nearby. This painting is the more naturalistic – Lucciani is shown sitting alone on some rocks, probably the coast near Falmouth where Tuke lived. Tuke gave this painting to the Royal Academy in 1917, the year after Lucciani was killed in action in the First World War.

Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

Showcase

Left to right

Henry Scott Tuke 1858–1929

Two Youths

Modern reproduction

Photographs, digital print on paper

Z07078

Tate Archive. TGA 9019/1/4/5/9

Henry Scott Tuke 1858–1929

Youth Lying Down

Modern reproduction

Photographs, digital print on paper

Z07081

Tate Archive. TGA 9019/1/4/5/12

Henry Scott Tuke 1858–1929

Two Youths

Modern reproduction

Photographs, digital print on paper

Z07079

Tate Archive. TGA 9019/1/4/5/10

William Blake Richmond 1842–1921

The Bowlers

1870

Oil paint on canvas

X00592

When William Blake Richmond's painting was first displayed at the Royal Academy in 1871, viewers were shocked by the inclusion of nude men and partially nude women in the same image. Lady Frederick Cavendish described it in her diary as depicting, 'ancients playing at bowls with nothing on, which I can not appreciate.' The bowlers' poses reference famous ancient statues, such as the bending bowler who evokes the **Discobolus (discus thrower)**. Some modern scholars have argued that these poses combine in ways that are open to homoerotic interpretation. This was not commented on by the painting's original audience.

The Master, Fellows, and Scholars of Downing College
in the University of Cambridge

Wilhelm von Gloeden 1856–1931

Head of a Sicilian Boy

1890s

Three Nude Youths

c.1900

2 photographs, Albumen print on paper

X64242, X64243

German photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden's images of Sicilian youths were internationally acclaimed. Writer Edmund Gosse told his friend John Addington Symonds he had taken a packet of these photographs to poet Robert Browning's funeral in Westminster Abbey and 'peeped at it again and again'. Von Gloeden's style was naturalistic, posing his models in the landscape or ruins of Taormina, where he settled in 1878. To our eyes, there is a troubling power dynamic between the wealthy von Gloeden and the impoverished Sicilian community, and the uncertain age of some of his models gives an uncomfortable undercurrent to his work.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Charles Robert Ashbee 1863–1942

Twin-handled Cup

1893

Metal

X63979

Made for Ashbee's friend James Headlam, this cup is inscribed 'To the ancient, from CRA, on the mournful occasion of his transition into matrimony'. This could be a joke about Headlam's loss of bachelor freedoms but within the queer camaraderie of Ashbee's circle it may also imply regret on abandoning same-sex passions for heterosexual respectability. Ashbee was a member of the Order of Chaeronea, a queer secret society. The cup's shape is somewhat suggestive: the central stem with the balls at the base and at the top of the drooping handles from certain angles resemble erect and flaccid penises. In 1898 Ashbee made his own transition, marrying Janet Forbes who was aware of his attraction to men.

Private collection

Walter Crane 1845–1915

The Renaissance of Venus

1877

Tempera on canvas

N02920

According to artist W Graham Robertson, when this painting was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, artist Frederic Leighton exclaimed 'But my dear fellow, that is not Aphrodite, that is Alessandro'. This was Alessandro di Marco, a celebrated male model, who, Robertson claimed, Walter Crane had used because his wife wouldn't let him paint from a female nude model. In spite of this explanation, Robertson appears to have enjoyed the gender fluid possibilities of the image, continuing 'Still, she was a fine, upstanding slip of a boy, and in the clear sunlit atmosphere ... she passed for Venus pleasantly enough.'

Tate. Presented by Mrs Watts by the wish of
the late George Frederic Watts 1913

Photographer unknown

John Addington Symonds

c.1850s

Photograph, tinted collodion on paper

X64247

John Addington Symonds was a writer, critic and an early campaigner for greater tolerance of same-sex desire. This photograph probably dates from Symonds's time at Oxford University (1858–1863). His studies informed his later essay, **A Problem in Greek Ethics** 1873, one of the earliest attempts at a history of male same-sex desire. Symonds frankly discussed his desires in his diaries and unpublished writings, which he believed would be 'useful to society'. However, when his friend Edmund Gosse inherited Symonds's papers in 1926, he burned them all apart from Symonds's autobiography. This destruction nauseated Symonds's granddaughter Janet Vaughan. It was not until 1984 that Symonds's autobiography was finally published.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Walter Pater 1839–1894

Studies in the history of the Renaissance

1873

London and New York: MacMillan and Co. 1983

X66797

Male beauty is a recurrent theme in Walter Pater's **Studies in the History of the Renaissance** but critics were most appalled at its 'Conclusion', advocating 'art for art's sake'. This chapter was interpreted as anti-religious and endorsing hedonism. It was removed for the second edition before being printed in the edited form shown here. Controversy around the book and rumours of a love affair with a male undergraduate cost Pater a prized academic position. Despite such efforts, Pater's original text had a profound effect on a generation of artists and critics, including Oscar Wilde who termed the book his 'golden book'.

Private collection

Middle of room

Frederic Leighton 1830–1896

The Sluggard

1885

Bronze

N01752

Frederic Leighton's **The Sluggard** seems to epitomise the dangerous beauty of aestheticism, the art movement dedicated to 'art for art's sake'. While he has the well-toned body of an athlete, his actions are involuntary and he is shown trampling a laurel crown as he throws off the last vestiges of sleep. It was exhibited to great acclaim in 1886. The figure's pleasure in his body suggests values critic Walter Pater associated with the Renaissance: man's 'reassertion of himself' as opposed to the medieval tendency 'to depreciate man's nature . . . to make it ashamed of itself '. Leighton's sculpture was influenced by Michelangelo's **Dying Slave** and it is striking that it was executed at a time when Michelangelo's sexuality was beginning to be re-evaluated.

Tate. Presented by Sir Henry Tate 1894

Hamo Thornycroft 1850–1925

The Mower

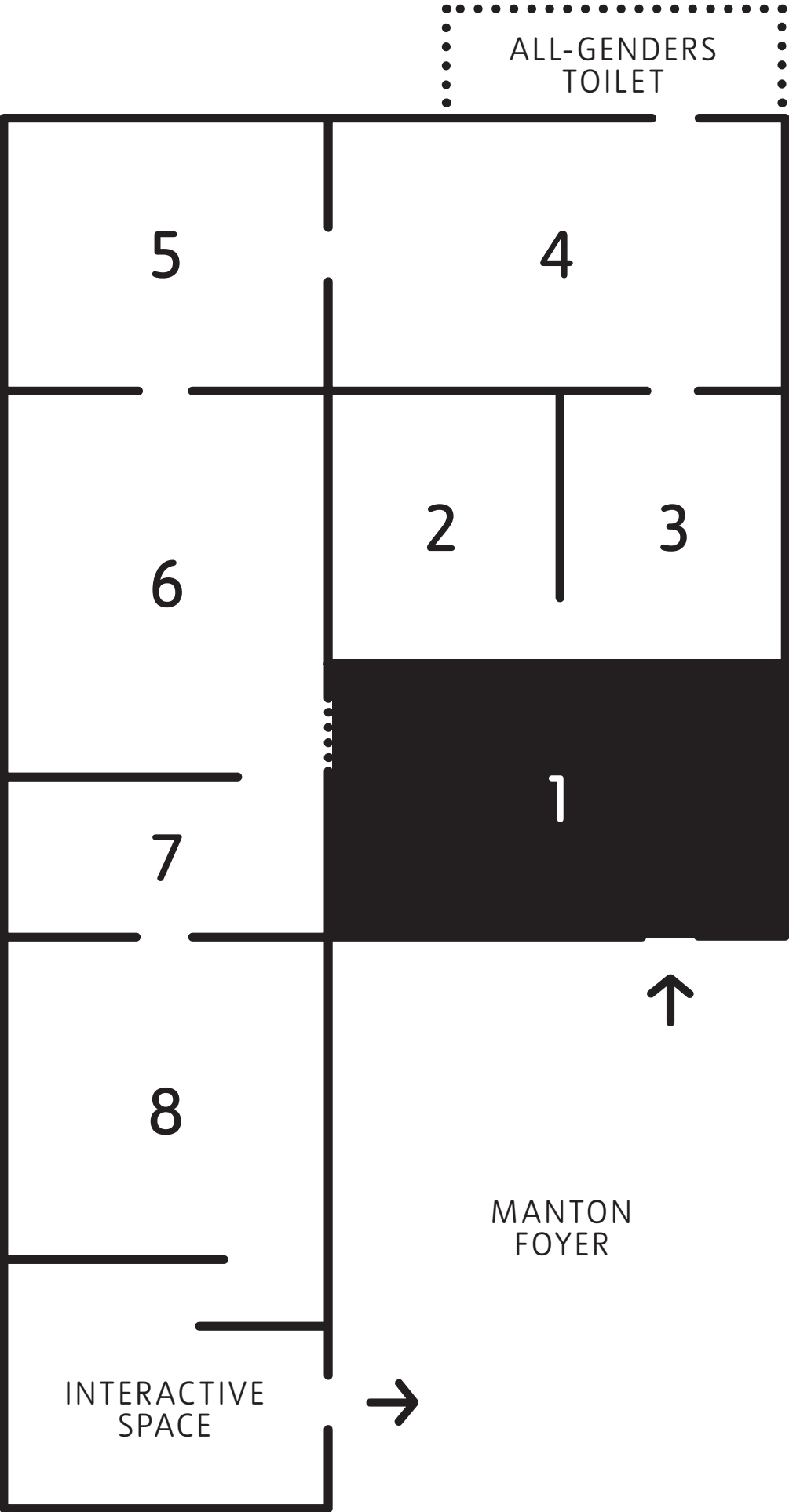
1888–90

Bronze

T03963

Hamo Thornycroft's innovative depiction of an attractive worker in labouring dress reflects Victorian fascination with the eroticised working-class body. The sculpture was based on a sketch that Thornycroft made during a summer boat trip along the Thames in 1882. The party included writer Edmund Gosse, who was in love with Thornycroft, although there is no evidence to suggest that this was requited. Thornycroft displayed a life-size version of this work at the Royal Academy with lines from poet Matthew Arnold's **Thrysis** and Gosse later reworked this poem to homoerotic effect in **The Shepherd of the Thames**, published after Thornycroft's marriage.

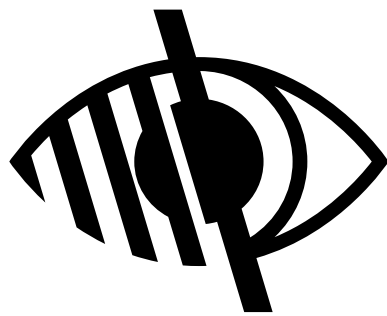
Tate. Presented by Arthur Grogan 1985



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ROOM 2 PUBLIC INDECENCY

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This room looks at ways in which sexuality and gender identity did – and did not – go public, from the 1880s to the 1920s. Public debate over sexuality and gender identity was stirred up by scandals, campaigns and scientific studies. The trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895 for gross indecency and Radclyffe Hall's novel **The Well of Loneliness** in 1928 for supposed obscenity put a spotlight on same-sex desire. In the field of science, the project of classifying sexual practices and forms of gender presentation into distinct identities, which had been begun by German psychiatrists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, reached Britain through the work of Havelock Ellis who co-authored his book **Sexual Inversion** 1896 with John Addington Symonds. However, change was slow, and many people remained unaware of new terminologies and approaches to the self that this new science offered.

Work labels

Clockwise from wall text

Roger Fry 1866–1934

Edward Carpenter

1894

Oil paint on canvas

X63274

Roger Fry met the campaigner Edward Carpenter in 1886, when Carpenter gave a lecture in Cambridge. In defiance of his times, Carpenter was a passionate advocate of same-sex relationships, vegetarianism, socialism and women's sexual autonomy and published extensively on these topics. Fry visited Carpenter at Millthorpe, the house in the Peak District where Carpenter lived openly with his working class lover George Merrill. They forged a lasting friendship. Fry described the painting in a letter to his mother as depicting Carpenter in his 'very anarchist overcoat'. The chair half-seen in the foreground and reflection in the mirror establishes the setting as a distinct space, possibly Fry's studio.

National Portrait Gallery, London. Given by Roger Fry, 1930

Henry Bishop 1868–1939

Henry Havelock Ellis

1890s

Oil paint on canvas

X63275

The sexologist Henry Havelock Ellis's great work **Sexual Inversion**, co-authored with John Addington Symonds, defined queer sexualities in Britain for a generation. Published in English in 1897, it drew on the experiences of people such as Edward Carpenter (whose portrait hangs nearby). It was effectively banned in Britain after the prosecution of a bookseller, George Bedborough. This informal portrait was probably made around the time of Bedborough's trial. It depicts Ellis sitting in a deckchair in Henry Bishop's studio in St Ives. There is some evidence Bishop was attracted to men and Ellis's non-judgemental attitudes may have encouraged Bishop to make his acquaintance. He became a lifelong friend

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by François Lafitte, 2003

Edmund Dulac 1882–1953

Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon as Medieval Saints

1920

Tempera on linen over board

X63261

Oscar Wilde described the home of the artist and designer Charles Ricketts and his lifelong partner the painter Charles Shannon as 'the one house in London where you will never be bored'. Here, the couple are playfully depicted by their friend Edmund Dulac in the robes of Dominican friars. These robes possibly hint at the permanence of their bond: monastic vows were, after all, intended to mark entry for life into an all-male community. The peacock feather in Rickett's hand signals their devotion to aestheticism, an art movement dedicated to beauty and 'art for art's sake'. By the 1920s, this was an emblem of a previous era.

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum,
University of Cambridge

Michael Field

The jewellery in this case was designed by Charles Ricketts for his friends Michael Field. Michael Field was born Edith Cooper and Katherine Bradley but together they developed a shared identity under the single male name of Michael Field. Despite Bradley being Cooper's aunt, the two became lovers and life partners. Their identity as Michael Field was integral to their lives. While they dressed in a traditionally feminine manner, they often (although not exclusively) used male names ('Michael' for Bradley, 'Henry' or 'Field' for Cooper) and pronouns, sometimes using a single male pronoun to refer to both of them. Ricketts was one of their closest friends. He addressed them as 'Poet' and they called him 'Artist', 'Fay' or 'Fairyman'.

When the sexologist Havelock Ellis inquired about Michael Field's literary collaboration, they replied: 'We cross and interlace like a company of dancing summer flies. . . Let no man think he can put asunder what God has joined'. The later phrase, echoing the words of the Anglican marriage service, hints at the strength of their relationship and they described themselves as 'closer married' than fellow poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning.

Top

Charles Ricketts 1866–1931

Made by Carlo & Arthur Giuliano, jeweller, London

**Pendant: Pegasus Drinking from the Fountain of Hippocrene
with portrait of Miss Edith Emma Cooper**

1901

Gold, enamel, garnets, pearls, graphite, watercolour, gold on card

Charles Ricketts's design for this pendant is inscribed 'executed for Michael Field to contain a miniature of Miss Cooper' and the portrait is monogrammed 'MF' for 'Michael Field'. In their joint diary, they recorded how Ricketts depicted the face as if seen under a flash of lightening; 'Then he discovered the infinite greyness of gold used as a shadow & that gave the pallor and sensitiveness to the face, specially the nose.'

Centre left

Charles Ricketts 1866–1931

Made by Carlo & Arthur Giuliano, jeweller, London

Pendant

1988

Gold, enamel, pearl, amethyst

Charles Ricketts originally designed this pendant to feature in a painting of Icarus and showed it to Michael Field when Giuliano had finished making it. Michael Field greatly admired it and Ricketts gave it to Michael/Bradley as a present.

Centre right

Charles Ricketts 1866–1931

The Sabbatai Ring

1904

Gold, sapphire, emerald, ambergris

The ring was inspired by a play written by Michael Field about the Jewish mystic Sabbatai Sebi. Worn on a chain round the neck, it was designed to appeal to the senses: it contains a loose emerald and was originally smeared with the perfume ambergris. Their journal tells how 'Fay [Charles Ricketts] is charmed by the ring Solomon in Michael's 'entre sein' [cleavage] – We talk toilette – how the breasts run wild in the new Samothrace corsets – They should be lifted somewhat like wine bottles raised for pouring!'

Bottom

Charles Ricketts 1866–1931

Made by Carlo & Arthur Giuliano, jeweller, London

The Blue Bird Brooch

1899

Gold, enamel, garnets, pearls, graphite, watercolour, gold on card

Charles Ricketts designed this brooch for Field/Cooper as present for Michael/Bradley's birthday in 1900. Michael/Bradley wrote 'My love has given me L'Oiseau bleu – the brooch designed by Ricketts – Byzantine, wonderful'. The

design was very similar to one by Edward Burne-Jones, whom Michael Field greatly admired. It became a favourite piece and was worn so often that it had to be repaired.

X63258, X63259, X63256

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum,
University of Cambridge

Case

Charles Ricketts 1866–1931

Psyche's Reception by the Gods

1901

Paper leaf, painted in bodycolour with gold, backed with parchment mounted on mother-of-pearl sticks and guards

X63257

This fan shows the conclusion of the story of Psyche and Eros. After many trials, the couple were allowed to marry. They can be seen embracing on the left. Michael Field published a cycle of poems telling this story in their volume **Bellerophôn** 1881. The style of this image resembles the work of Edward Burne-Jones. It is inscribed 'To M. Field', underlining the importance of their shared identity.

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum,
University of Cambridge

Beresford Egan 1905–1984

St Stephen from *The Sink of Solitude*

1928

Print

X64018

Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* inspired many satires including the *The Girls of Radclyffe Hall* by Lord Berners, depicting his (male) friends such as Cecil Beaton as libidinous schoolgirls, and Beresford Egan's *The Sink Of Solitude*.

Illustrated as well as written by Egan, here he presents Hall's tortured hero Stephen Gordon as 'St Stephen', grim-faced with Hall's own profile. A nubile and strikingly explicit female figure leaps across the scene while a demonic cupid looks on. The style of the illustration owes much to Aubrey Beardsley, whose *Lysistrata* illustrations were obliquely cited at Hall's trial as evidence that artistic merit did not justify obscenity.

Charles Buchel 1872–1950

Radclyffe Hall

1918

Oil paint on canvas

X63277

Born 'Marguerite' Radclyffe Hall and known as 'John' to close friends, Radclyffe Hall was a key figure in provoking debate on female same-sex desire. This portrait was made ten years before Hall found fame as the author of **The Well of Loneliness** 1928. Despite the pleas of literary figures, including Virginia Woolf, this novel was effectively banned on the grounds of obscenity for its frank depiction of female same-sex desire. It was semi-autobiographical and was influenced by Havelock Ellis's **Sexual Inversion**. Hall's sober jacket, skirt, cravat and monocle in this image reflected contemporary female fashions for a more masculine style of dress. After the trial, Hall's clothes and cropped hair became associated with lesbianism and this portrait has become a queer icon. It was given to the National Portrait Gallery by Hall's lover, Una Troubridge.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by Una Elena Vincenzo (née Taylor),

Lady Troubridge, 1963

Case

The Trials of Oscar Wilde

In 1891 Oscar Wilde was introduced to Lord Alfred Douglas, a handsome undergraduate at Oxford University who was known as 'Bosie'. An intimate friendship followed which developed into a tempestuous love affair. Wilde was entranced and lavished gifts on Bosie. Bosie had a reckless temperament and a taste for male sex workers. He encouraged Wilde to explore the underbelly of Victorian society, which Wilde had immortalised in his 1890 novel **The Picture of Dorian Gray**.

Bosie's father, the Marquis of Queensberry, got wind of their relationship. On 18 February 1895 he left the calling card (shown here) at Wilde's club with a misspelled inscription: 'For Oscar Wilde, posing Somdomite'. Bosie encouraged Wilde to sue for libel and Wilde, against the advice of his friends, complied. The trial collapsed when Queensberry's lawyers and detectives produced evidence of Wilde's relationships with sex workers. Wilde was arrested and his creditors closed in. On 25 May 1895, he was convicted of gross indecency and sentenced to two years hard labour.

Gillman and Co.

Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas

1893

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X63278

National Portrait Gallery, London

**Visiting card and envelope for the Marquis of Queensberry;
Exhibit 'A' in Oscar Wilde's Trial**

18 February 1895

X64743, X66255

On loan from The National Archives, UK, CRIM 1/41/6 f.1,
CRIM 1/41/6 f.2

This is the visiting card, inscribed 'For Oscar Wilde, posing Somdomite', that the Marquis of Queensberry left at Oscar Wilde's club. Wilde sued for libel but the evidence amassed by Queensberry's lawyers led to Wilde's own downfall.

**Programme for 'The Importance of Being Earnest'
by Oscar Wilde**

1895

X64248

V&A Theatre and Performance.

This programme was from the first production of Wilde's **The Importance of Being Earnest**, which was having its first run at the time of his arrest. The scandal frightened audiences away and Wilde's name was swiftly dropped from the programme and all advertising material.

Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898

Cover design for 'The Yellow Book'

1894

Ink on paper

N04171

The Yellow Book was the leading journal associated with the decadent movement. It took its name from the wrapping used for controversial French novels. Wilde never wrote for it but it was widely reported that he had a yellow book with him when he was arrested at the Cadogan Hotel, (it was actually Pierre Louÿs's French novel **Aphrodite**). This confusion caused a crowd to mob the magazine's publishing house.

Tate. Bequeathed by John Lane 1926

Robert Harper Pennington 1854–1920

Oscar Wilde

c.1881

Oil paint on canvas

X63132

The American artist Harper Pennington gave this portrait to Wilde and his wife Constance as a wedding present in 1884. It captures Wilde as a young man aged 27, on the cusp of success and it hung in Wilde's home in Tite Street, Chelsea, London. While awaiting trial, Wilde was declared bankrupt and all his possessions, including this portrait, were sold at public auction to pay his debts. Few objects from his extensive collection have been traced. This painting was bought by Wilde's friend Ada Leverson and it was kept in storage. Wilde told a friend that Ada's husband 'could not have it in his drawing-room as it was obviously, on account of its subject, demoralising to young men, and possibly to young women of advanced views'.

William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles, California

Oscar Wilde's Prison Door

c.1883

Wood and metal

X63336

This is the door of Oscar Wilde's prison cell at Reading Gaol. Wilde spent three months of his incarceration writing a tortured letter to his lover Lord Alfred Douglas. This was later published as **De Profundis** ('from the depths'). Wilde was not allowed to send the letter, although the manuscript was given back to him when he left prison. He told his friend Robert Ross, 'I know that on the day of my release I will merely be moving from one prison into another, and there are times when the whole world seems to be no larger than my cell, and as full of terror for me. '

Kindly loaned by the Galleries of Justice Museum, Nottingham

Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898

Top

The Examination of the Herald from 'Lysistrata'

by Aristophanes

1896

Ink on paper

In Aristophanes's play **Lysistrata**, the Spartan women have rejected their men through a similar pact to Lysistrata's Athenians, causing their messenger to arrive with a giant erection. Perhaps he is also making a joke about impotence in the Athenian's gesture towards his own diminutive (and flaccid) penis. The Herald's confidence and the Athenian's sly smile, extended fingers and close proximity to the Herald's erection all offer scope for viewers to ignore the literary context and interpret the scene as a titillating sexual encounter.

Bottom

The Lacedaemonian Ambassadors from 'Lysistrata'

by Aristophanes

1896

Ink on paper

Refused sex by their women, the Lacedaemonian ambassadors arrive on stage with giant erections. Their only adornments are their fetishistic hair, boots and an elaborate turban. The man at the front clutches his enormous phallus, possibly signalling

masturbation, while the man at the rear stretches his hand out towards the central man's penis, their intertwined feet potentially suggesting entangled bodies. This is a very different sort of encounter to the easy lesbianism of the Athenian women: the instigator here looks away furtively, signalling the illicit nature of this encounter.

Left

Lysistrata Haranguing the Athenian Women from 'Lysistrata' by Aristophanes

1896

Ink on paper

Beardsley's publisher Leonard Smithers commissioned drawings for his 1896 edition of Aristophanes's bawdy play **Lysistrata** 411BC. Here Lysistrata tells the Athenian women that they can end war if they will 'Abstain from – Penis'. The comfortable nudity of the women contrasts with Lysistrata's elaborate ruffles, suggesting, perhaps, a contrast between natural sexuality and artificial abstinence. Agreeing to Lysistrata's plan does not seem to be constraining the women to chastity. The heavy-lidded figure on the right is already reaching towards the central woman's crotch, her outstretched figures suggesting the means by which she can offer sexual gratification.

X64233, X64235, X64236

Victoria and Albert Museum.

Purchased with the assistance of The Art Fund

Jacques-Emile Blanche 1861–1942

Aubrey Vincent Beardsley

1895

Oil paint on canvas

X63276

Painted in August 1895 in the wake of the Wilde scandal, this portrait captures Beardsley's dandyish appearance.

While Beardsley does not seem to have had relationships with men, his association with Wilde through Salome led to his dismissal as editor of literary journal **The Yellow Book** (see the nearby showcase). The artist, Jacques-Émile Blanche, became a friend although he found Beardsley's stories 'so daring it would have been better had he told them in Greek'. Blanche described Beardsley as 'wearing a light grey suit, a flower in his buttonhole, gloved, he held a big cane vertically in the middle with which he struck the ground chanting his sentences and accompanying his words '.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898

Top

Enter Herodias from 'Salome' by Oscar Wilde

1890s

Photo-process print on paper

Here Herodias, Salome's mother makes a dramatic entrance, bare-breasted and positioned at the centre of the composition. The grotesque figure on the left plucks at her cloak, his robe barely concealing his giant phallus, while the slender page appears notably unmoved. They seem to epitomise two forms of masculinity: the grotesquely heterosexual and the elegantly ambiguous. Oscar Wilde is satirised as the showman-like jester in the foreground.

Bottom

The Peacock Skirt from 'Salome' by Oscar Wilde

c.1890s

Photo-process print on paper

In this scene from Oscar Wilde's play **Salome**, the dancer Salome seductively asks the guard Narraboth to bring out Iokanaan (John the Baptist). Like the male peacock's tail, her 'peacock skirt' is spread out to display her sexuality. Beardsley's design allows their meeting to be interpreted suggestively. Salome's cloak turns her body into a phallic column, her head

forming its head. She seems about to engulf the diminutive Narraboth, who is depicted somewhat effeminately. Slender and elegant, he hooks one finger in his robe and limply raises his other wrist.

Right

The Dancer's Reward from 'Salome' by Oscar Wilde

1890s

Photo-process print on paper

Oscar Wilde wrote his play **Salome** in Paris in 1891. Wilde saw a drawing that Beardsley had made of a scene from the play for **The Studio** magazine and asked Beardsley to illustrate the English edition of **Salome**, published in 1894. In the image shown here, Salome receives the head of Iokanaan (John the Baptist). Scholars have commented on the phallic appearance of the executioner's elongated arm and the vaginal imagery of Salome's open gown. Her pointed teeth in Beardsley's design make her seem vampiric and she grips Iokanaan's forelock with savage force.

X63297, X63298, X64232

Victoria and Albert Museum

Maud Allan as Salome in 'The Vision of Salome'

c.1908

J Beagles & Co.

Bromide postcard print

X63358

Billed as 'The Salome Dancer', Maud Allan's **Vision of Salome** opened in Vienna in 1906 before travelling to London. Allen designed her own scanty (by Edwardian standards) costumes and gained such a reputation that she was barred from several cities on her 1909 tour of Britain. Her exotic act and colourful life led MP Noel Pemberton Billing to accuse her in 1918 of being 'a member of the cult of the clitoris', a phrase that variously hints at sexual pleasure, promiscuity and lesbianism. Allen sued for libel but lost, severely damaging her career.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by Patrick O'Connor, 2010

Case

Left to right

Salome's Followers

Oscar Wilde's play **Salome** premiered in Paris in 1896, while Wilde was still in jail. It had been banned from public theatre in Britain in 1892, but private theatrical clubs were unaffected by the law and it was eventually staged at the New English Theatre Club in 1902. Wilde's play was already notorious for its decadent depiction of female sexuality. It inspired many followers, ranging from Richard Strauss's opera **Salome** to music hall versions of Salome's exotic 'dance of the seven veils'.

Malcolm Scott in his 'Salome' dress

c.1905

J Beagles & Co.

Bromide postcard print

X63361

Malcolm Scott's 'Salome dance' was directed at a bottle of whisky. The New York **Dramatic Mirror** described how: 'creeping upon it stealthily as the usual Salome approaches the head of John the Baptist, Scott makes sure of its identity and then breaks forth into a mad whirling dance of joy, throwing himself upon the object of his affection and hopping ecstatically about. Nothing funnier than this moment has been seen in a New York vaudeville theatre.'

National Portrait Gallery, London. Given by Terence Pepper, 2014

Cecil Beaton 1904–1980

Stephen Tennant as Prince Charming

1927

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63271

Socialite and 'Bright Young Thing' Stephen Tennant lies as if asleep on shimmering silks, his lips glossy, his hair perfectly curled, his eyes demurely closed. While he is Prince Charming, the pose is more reminiscent of Snow White, waiting chastely for his prince to come and wake him. Beaton first met the flamboyantly queer Tennant at a house party in 1926, beginning a lifelong friendship. Beaton designed this Elizabethan costume for Tennant to wear as Prince Charming in a charity matinée at the New Theatre, London.

National Portrait Gallery, London. Accepted in lieu of tax by H.M. Government and allocated to the Gallery, 1991

Cecil Beaton 1904–1980

Madge Garland

1927

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63273

Beaton's photograph of Madge Garland was taken in the year he signed his first contract with Vogue. Garland started as British Vogue's receptionist before rising to become an influential fashion journalist. Beaton depicts her with smartly shingled hair against a modernist background. Garland lived with her lover Dorothy Todd, British Vogue's second editor, who had turned the magazine into a bastion of avant-garde style. Their relationship made them vulnerable – the year before this photograph was taken, they were both sacked over falling circulation figures and rumours that reached Condé Nast, Vogue's publisher. When Todd threatened to sue, they were threatened with public exposure.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by Madge Garland, 1991

Cecil Beaton 1904–1980

Cecil Beaton and his Friends

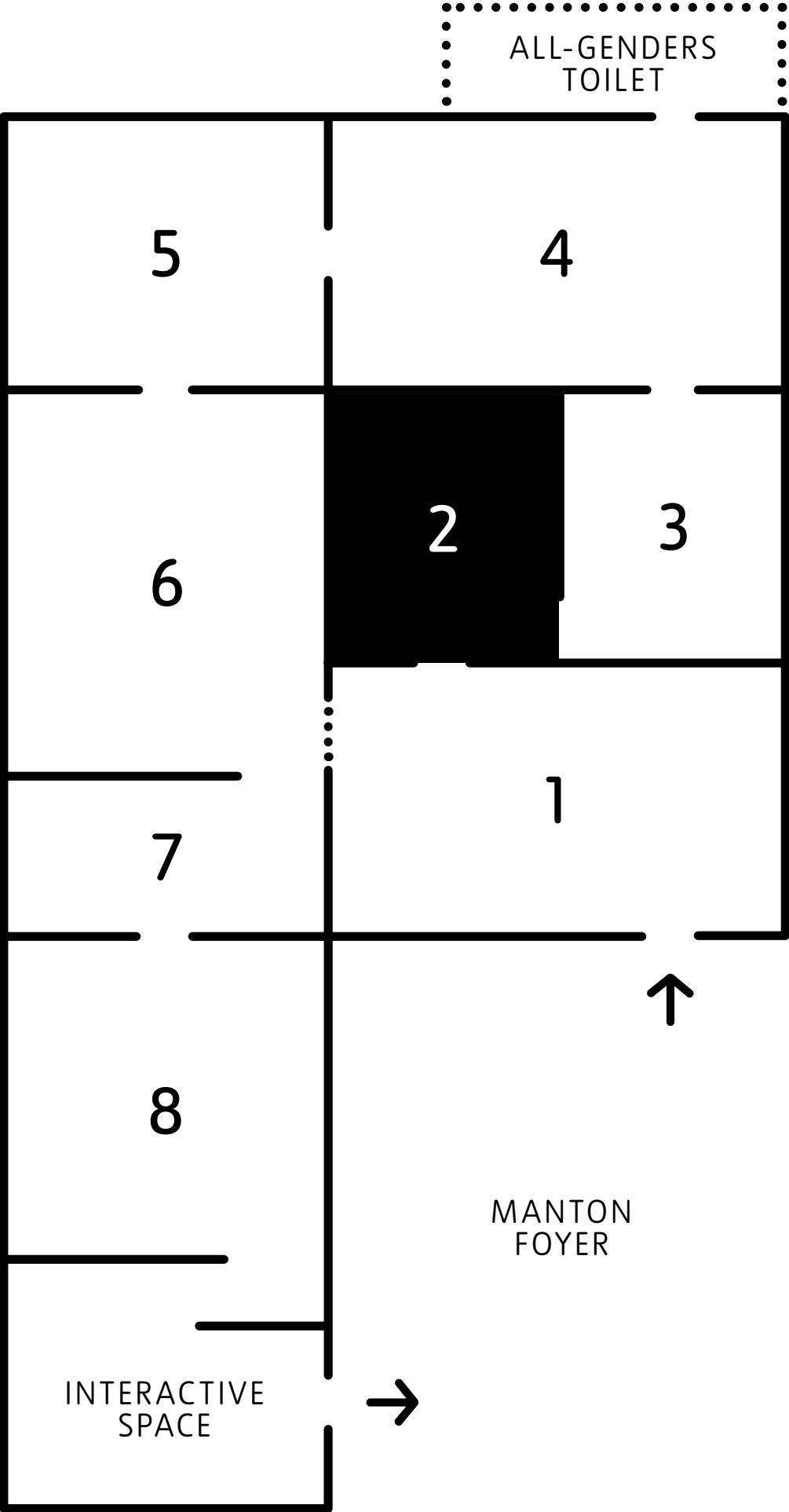
1927

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63279

This photograph was taken at Wilsford Manor in Wiltshire, Stephen Tennant's childhood home. The party depicted here includes Tennant, artist Rex Whistler, society hostess Zita Jungman and Beaton himself, although their elaborate fancy dress and make-up makes it hard to tell them apart. The poet Siegfried Sassoon, Tennant's lover at this time, wrote in his diary, 'It was very amusing, and they were painted up to the eyes, but I didn't quite like it'.

National Portrait Gallery, London. Accepted in lieu of tax by H.M. Government and allocated to the Gallery, 1991



QUEER BRITISH ART 1861–1967

5 April – 1 October 2017

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 3 THEATRICAL TYPES

Please return to holder

The use of 'theatrical' as a euphemism for queer hints at the rich culture on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century stage. The extent to which audiences were aware of this varied. Music hall male and female 'impersonation acts' were wildly popular but were mostly seen as innocent 'family fun'. In the formal theatre, plays for public production had to be passed by the Lord Chamberlain's office. While some directors found ways to avoid censorship, there were few positive and explicit depictions of queer lives and experience. Many celebrities who were in same-sex relationships understandably tried to keep their lives from public view, although their desires were often open secrets. Nevertheless, whether as the subject of a moralistic 'problem' play or an innuendo in a saucy song, queer perspectives could find public expression on the stage.

Work labels

Anticlockwise from wall text

Programme for 'The Blackmailers'

1894

Programme, Prince of Wales Theatre, 7 June 1894

X64244

The Blackmailers has been cited as the first overt depiction of a same-sex relationship on the British stage. The plot centres on a male couple who blackmail a former mistress. One of the authors, Gray, had been part of Oscar Wilde's circle before moving in with his co-author Raffalovich and the central characters may have been modelled on Wilde and Bosie. Its sole performance was at the Prince of Wales Theatre, 7 June 1894, the year before the Wilde trial. **The Times** found it 'sordid and repulsive' while the authors complained that it had been 'mangled and mutilated' by the censor.

Leslie Hurry 1909–1978

Set design for 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof'

1958

Ink, gouache and crayon on paper

X64245

The surrealist artist Leslie Hurry designed this production of Tennessee Williams **Cat On A Hot Tin Roof**, directed by Peter Hall and staged in January 1958. The plot centres on Brick, who has lost interest in his wife and taken to drink after the death of a close male friend. Private members clubs did not need approval for scripts so when the censor banned the play, a club was formed for would-be audience members. Such staging under 'club conditions' was a common subterfuge. Critics were impressed and commented on the play's queer themes, **The Guardian** referring to Brick's 'homosexual proclivity'.

V&A Theatre and Performance.

Purchased with the assistance of the Linbury Trust

Angus Mcbean

Angus McBean's career was forged in the theatre. Success came in 1936 with his photographs of Max Beerbohm's **The Happy Hypocrite** 1896, starring Ivor Novello. In a break with convention, McBean's close-up images were well lit with studio lights and staged as intimate tableaux. Inspired by the **International Surrealist** exhibitions of 1936 and 1937, he began to make playful 'surrealised portraits', which were initially published in **The Sketch**. These used complex props and staging to create fantastical scenes and to give the illusion of distorted scale.

The images here all depict sitters who were in same-sex relationships. McBean's own relationships with men led to a police raid on his house and his arrest in 1942 for criminal acts of homosexuality. He was convicted and sentenced to four years in jail but was released in 1944 and quickly re-established his reputation as a photographer.

Angus McBean 1904–1990

Sir Robert Murray Helpmann

1950

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63357

McBean's portrait of Robert Helpmann, published in **The Tatler and Bystander** on 28 April 1948, shows him in the role of Hamlet, which he was then playing at Stratford-upon-Avon. The production was designed to be Victorian gothic: an Elsinore of guttering candles and chiaroscuro lighting effects. There is perhaps some suggestion of this in the heavy shadows of McBean's photograph, while Helpmann's dramatic make-up emphasises his melancholic expression. The backdrop was created from a blown-up photograph of text from the First Folio of the play. In defiance of the law, Helpmann lived comparatively openly with his partner, the theatre director Michael Benthall. Their relationship lasted from 1938 until Benthall's death, in 1974.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Angus McBean 1904–1990

Binkie Beaumont, Angela Baddeley and (George) Emlyn Williams

1947

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63307

Published in **The Tatler and Bystander** on 6 August 1947, McBean's portrait of the theatrical producer Binkie Beaumont was one of the most celebrated in McBean's **Play Personalities** series. It depicts Beaumont apparently manipulating puppets of the actors Emlyn Williams and Angela Baddeley, in their roles in the first production of Terence Rattigan's **The Winslow Boy** 1946. While the surreal effect of this image could have been achieved through montage, McBean preferred to stage it using a toy theatre and cut-out images of the actors.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Angus McBean 1904–1990

Beatrix Lehmann

1937

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X6326

Beatrix Lehmann was one of McBean's first surrealised portraits, published in **The Sketch** on 29 December 1937. This photograph was made to publicise Eugene O'Neill's (1888–1953) 1931 play, **Mourning Becomes Electra**, in which Lehmann had the starring role of Lavinia. Roy Hobdell painted the background and McBean dressed the scene with studio props and a length of taffeta. He described the photograph as 'the most simply achieved of all my surreal efforts and certainly one of the best '. Lehmann's relationships with women were comparatively well known within theatrical circles. Amongst other lovers, she had a five year relationship with Henrietta Bingham, who had previously had an affair with the artist Dora Carrington.

Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

Given anonymously 1995

Angus McBean 1904–1990

Berto Pasuka

1946

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63270

The dancer and choreographer Berto Pasuka was a friend of McBean. Together with his friend Richie Riley, Pasuka started **Les Ballets Nègres** in 1946, the first black ballet company in Britain. McBean took a number of portrait and publicity shots for them, including this photograph. Pasuka was actively involved in creating these images and managing his public representation. **Les Ballets Nègres** was immensely successful, attracting large audiences and gaining critical acclaim. It offered what Riley later described as 'in every shape and form, ballet in a black idiom'.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Glyn Warren Philpot 1884–1937

Glen Byam Shaw as 'Laertes'

1934–5

Oil paint on canvas

X63349

The actor Glen Byam Shaw is depicted here as Laertes in John Gielgud's 1934 critically acclaimed production of **Hamlet** in a costume designed by Motley: Elizabeth Montgomery, Margaret Percy and Sophie Harris. Glyn Philpot cut down the original three-quarter length portrait after it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1935. This reduction puts even greater focus on Byam Shaw's face and heavy stage make-up. While the image is typical of productions of the period, the medium of the portrait removes it from its original theatrical context. Coupled with Byam Shaw's arch expression, the overriding impression is one of high camp. Byam Shaw had almost certainly been the lover of the poet Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) and may have met Philpot through Sassoon.

Kindly lent by the sitter's grandson, Charles Hart

Oliver Messel 1904–1978

Design for 'Suddenly Last Summer'

1959

Charcoal, pencil, Chinese white, ink and wash on paper

X64231

Oliver Messel's last film, **Suddenly, Last Summer** 1959 was based on a 1958 play by the Tennessee Williams. Filmed at the Shepperton Studios near London, it was a queer gothic fantasy with an all-star cast including Katharine Hepburn and Elizabeth Taylor. Messel's designs were nominated for two Oscars. The plot focuses on Catherine Holly, who has apparently lost her mind after her cousin Sebastian Venerable died on holiday in Rome. It transpires that Sebastian used Holly as bait to attract young men and has been torn apart and eaten by a group of begging youths. This design depicts Sebastian's studio.

V&A Theatre and Performance. Acquired with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund and the Friends of the V&A

Oliver Messel 1904–1978

Design for the King in 'Sleeping Beauty'

Design for the Queen in 'Sleeping Beauty'

c.1946

Charcoal, ink, pencil, gouache and watercolour on paper

X64228, X64230

Produced for the 1946 reopening of Sadler's Wells Ballet after the Second World War, Oliver Messel's designs for Tchaikovsky's **Sleeping Beauty** are widely recognised to be his masterpiece. Choreographed by Frederick Ashton and starring Robert Helpmann, it was a sumptuous pastoral fairy-tale that Messel managed to create at a time of post-war austerity. The costume for the King, Sleeping Beauty's father, in Act I of the ballet, is typically flamboyant: a tasselled vision of burgundy and gold, topped with a seemingly solid gold crown, made from papier mâché while the Queen's costume was one of Messel's most lavish.

V&A Theatre and Performance. Acquired with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund and the Friends of the V&A

Francis Goodman 1913–1989

Oliver Messel

1945

Photograph, silver gelatin print on paper

X63360

Francis Goodman's carefully posed photograph depicts Oliver Messel, the foremost British stage designer from the 1920s to the 1950s, surrounded by eclectic props. The producer Charles Cochran recalled how Messel 'would pull something new out of his pocket – usually something used for domestic work – which he proposed to employ to give the illusion of some other fabric'. Messel was attracted to men and his fascination with dandyish excess, pastiche and artifice has been interpreted as a queer aesthetic.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by the estate of Francis Goodman, 1989

Nöel Coward's Dressing Gown

Silk with applique and machine embroidery in cotton

X64226

The writer, composer and performer Nöel Coward once asked 'Why am I always expected to wear a dressing-gown, smoke cigarettes in a long holder and say "Darling, how wonderful"?' From his first appearance on stage in a dressing gown in his play **The Vortex**, the dressing gown had become an immediately identifiable part of his image. This example, from his extensive collection, is monogrammed. Many have found covert queer themes in Coward's work. Yet while he was in a long-standing relationship with Graham Payne, he did not discuss his sexuality, remarking in the 1960s 'there are still a few old ladies in Worthing who don't know'.

Oliver Messel 1904–1978

Mask

c.1927

Paper, paint, glaze, glue and synthetic hair

X64227

An inscription in Oliver Messel's hand inside this mask tells how 'this was the mask that Noël Coward saw that gave him the idea for "Dance Little Lady"'. This song and dance number, written by Coward, was one of the star turns in *This Year of Grace*, Cochran's 1928 Revue. 'Dance Little Lady' satirised the Bright Young Things. In it, Lauri Devine was surrounded by Messel's pop-eyed, open-mouthed masks. According to Cochran, it 'faithfully reproduced the mirthless vacuous expressions that could be seen any night in smart restaurants and bars. '

V&A Theatre and Performance. Acquired with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund and the Friends of the V&A

Poster for 'A Patriot for Me'

1965

Poster. Printed by Echo Press

X64246

Set during the 19th Century in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, John Osborne's **A Patriot For Me** focuses on the blackmailing of an intelligence officer for his relationships with men and culminates in a drag ball attended by Viennese high society. The Lord Chamberlain's office demanded substantial cuts to the play. Osborne refused and it was staged under 'club conditions' at the Royal Court Theatre in July, 1965. Around 20 thousand people became members of the 'English Stage Club' to attend and the play became the focus of calls to repeal censorship.

Angus McBean 1904–1990

Danny La Rue

1968

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63268

Born Danny Carroll, Danny La Rue was one of the greatest stars in female impersonation. La Rue first performed while in the navy during the Second World War and later toured with all-male revues such as **Forces in Petticoats** before becoming a cabaret star. La Rue's glamorous appearance on stage, captured here, was undercut by the gruff 'wotcher mates', with which he opened his set. La Rue preferred the term 'comic in a frock' to 'female impersonator' and described his act as 'playing a woman knowing that everyone knows it's a fella'.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Paul Tanqueray 1905–1991

Douglas Byng

1934

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63436

Gay performer Douglas Byng gained the title 'The Highest Priest of Camp' with songs such as 'Doris the Goddess of Wind', 'I'm a Mummy (An Old Egyptian Queen)' and 'Cabaret Boys', which he performed with Lance Lester. Coward described him as 'The most refined vulgarity in London, mais quel artiste!' Byng's costume in Paul Tanqueray's photograph was probably the one he wore for his song 'Wintertime'.

You can hear Douglas Byng and Lance Lester singing 'Cabaret Boys' at the audio point nearby.

National Portrait Gallery. Given by Paul Tanqueray, 1974

Case

Left to right

Gender Swaps On Stage

Male and female impersonation acts were an established feature of music hall and Vaudeville from the 1890s until the 1950s. Female performers such as Vesta Tilley, Ella Shields and Hetty King dazzled audiences with their performances as idle young men while their male counterparts amazed with their glamorous or comic transformations.

The First and Second World Wars boosted these types of act, which were seen as respectable family entertainment. Hetty King and Vesta Tilley dressed as soldiers and sailors, and female impersonators entertained the troops. Revues starring ex-servicemen launched the careers of Tommy Rose, Ronnie Stewart and Danny La Rue. As the popularity of female impersonation declined in the 1950s, some of these performers moved into the new area of drag, in which Chris Shaw made his name.

Ronnie Stewart in 'Soldiers in Skirts'

1947

Photograph on paper

X64030

Wellcome Library, London

Vesta Tilley

1900s

Rotary Photographic Co. Ltd

Bromide postcard print

X63359

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by Patrick O'Connor, 2010

Jimmy Slater with a Kitten

1923

Photograph on paper

X64038

Sarah Moss

Burlington Bertie

1915

Published by Lawrence Wright

X63299

V&A Theatre and Performance. Given by Mrs R. Russell

Jimmy Slater with Fan

c.1925

Photograph on paper

X64036

V&A Theatre and Performance. Given by Mrs R. Russell

Hetty King (Winifred Emms)

1910s

The Philco Publishing

Bromide postcard print

X63433

National Portrait Gallery, London. Given by Norman McCann, 2011

Tommie Rose

1948

Facsimile reproduction

Z07351

Wellcome Library, London

Terry Durham

1960s

Facsimile reproduction

Z07354

Wellcome Library, London

Cynthia Tingey

Costume design for Danny La Rue

in the Winston Club Cabaret, London

1960

Crayon and gouache on paper

X64224

V&A Theatre and Performance. Given by Cynthia Tingey

Pink Wig worn by Jimmy Slater

c.1925

Diamante Earrings worn by Jimmy Slater

c.1915

William Berry 'Willy' Clarkson 1861–1934

Tiara worn by Jimmy Slater

c.1925

These accessories belonged to Jimmy Slater (1898–1998), who dazzled audiences as a female impersonator from 1914 onwards. A 1927 review in the **Illustrated Leicester Chronicle** described Slater's costumes as 'the envy of all the West End Mannequins' and told how 'his slim figure and perfectly modelled face has so often "taken in" old gentlemen in the stalls'. This wig reflects a brief fashion for pink hair in the 1930s, the tiara was made by one of the best London costumiers and the earrings were given to Slater by fellow performer Florrie Ford. Images of Slater in costume are displayed nearby.

X64031, X64032, X64033

Sarah Moss

Frederick Spalding

Fanny Boulton and Stella Graham

c.1870

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper
from original glass plate negative

Z07349

Raised as Ernest Boulton and Frederick Parks, Fanny Boulton and Stella Graham were arrested in 1870 for 'inciting persons to commit an unnatural offence'. Forced to strip at the police station, they were charged with conspiracy to commit 'the abominable Crime of Buggery'. Domestic servants attested that Stella was living as the wife of Lord Arthur Pelham-Clinton, but Pelham-Clinton died before he could stand trial. A sensational court case followed. Perhaps surprisingly, despite extensive evidence of their love affairs, the jury found that there was no conclusive evidence of buggery and they were acquitted to loud cheers. Stella revived her earlier stage career, touring the United States.

Poster for 'Soldiers in Skirts'

1945

X64034

This poster shows the sheer range of acts on offer at the Pavilion theatre in Liverpool, including Jimmy Slater, whose accessories are displayed nearby, and **Soldiers in Skirts** – one of the most commercially successful touring acts on the British stage in this period.

Case

Left to right

Queer Performance

Gender swaps on stage were common from the 1880s onwards, from classical actors like Charlotte Saunders, shown here in a striking beard, to female impersonators such as George Robey and Julian Eltinge. Such acts were seen as much as family entertainments as pantomime, with its conventions of the female 'principal boy' and male 'dame'. Dan Leno even combined the dame with her more glamorous music hall counterpart in **Mother Goose**, transforming from comic old woman to young beauty.

There was no simple association between such performances and queer sexualities or gender identities. The trapeze artist Samuel Wasgate, for example, found he attracted larger audiences as 'Lulu – the eighth wonder of the world'. When a stage accident revealed his gender, he cut his hair and dressed as a man again. Some of the queerest performances did not involve any transformation. Fred Barnes's hit song 'The Black Sheep of the Family' offered additional layers of meaning for those who were aware of his relationships with men.

Adolphe Beau

Charlotte Saunders Cushman as 'Hercules'

19th century

Photograph on paper

X64241

V&A Theatre and Performance. Bequeathed by Guy Little

'Lulu' (El Nino Farini)

c.1870

Photograph on paper

X64237

V&A Theatre and Performance. Bequeathed by Guy Little

George Robey in character with Sunbeam make-up

c.1910

Hana London

Photograph postcard print

X64025

Wellcome Library, London

Julian Eltinge

c.1907

Photograph postcard print

X64026

Wellcome Library, London

Frederick Jester Barnes in 'The Black Sheep of the Family' (Left)

1907

Frank Dobson of Liverpool, published by J Beagles & Co.

Bromide postcard print

X63434

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by Patrick O'Connor, 2010

Minnie Mario as the Prince and Kate Vaughan in the title role of Cinderella, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane

c.1883

Photograph on paper

X64240

V&A Theatre and Performance. Bequeathed by Guy Little

Dan Leno in 'Mother Goose' Act 2

Photograph postcard print

X64239

V&A Theatre and Performance

Una Troubridge 1887–1963

Vaslav Nijinsky as the faun in 'L'après midi d'un Faune'
performed by Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, Theatre du Chatelet,
Paris, 20 May 1912.

Plaster

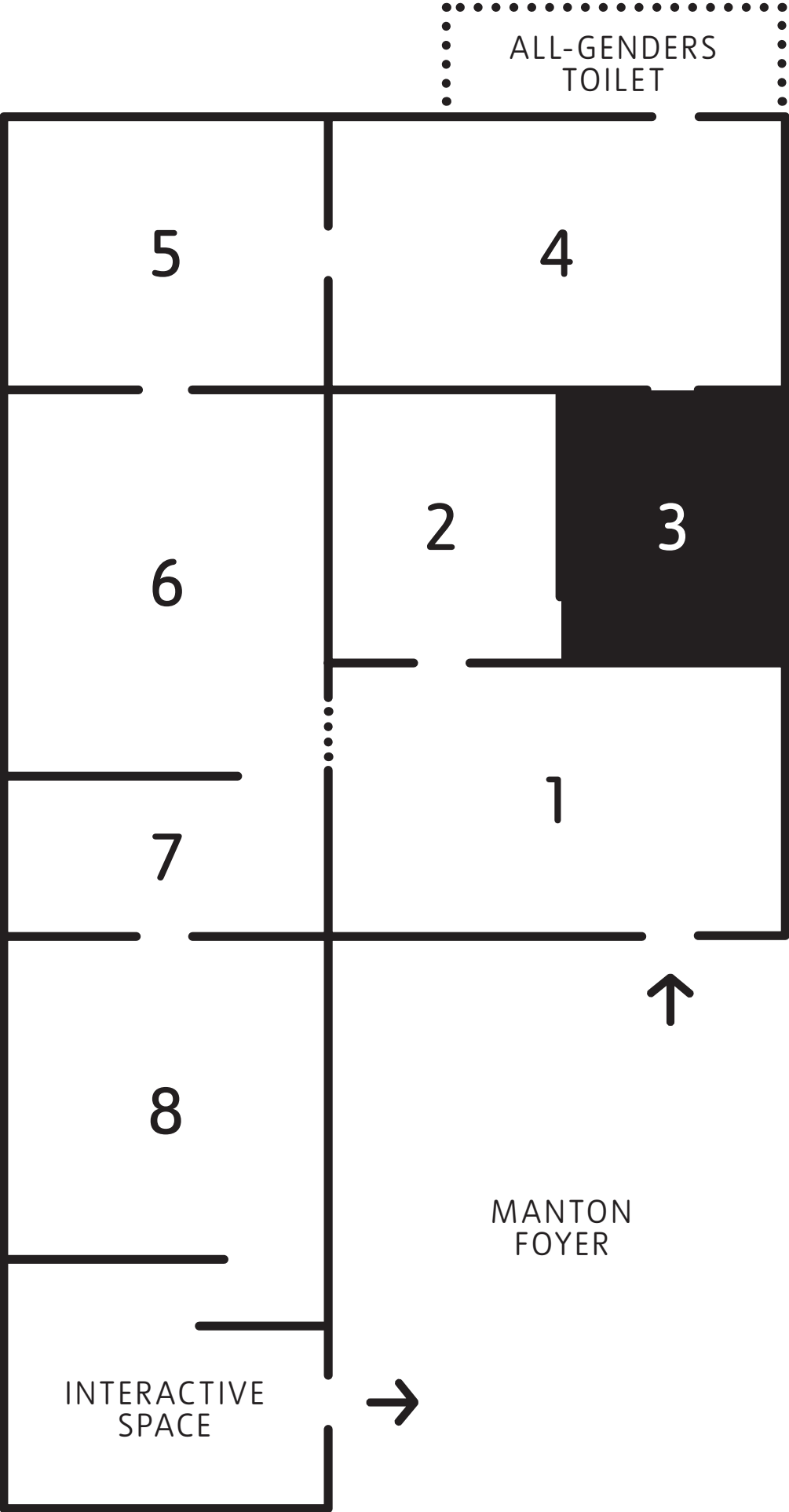
1912

X63334

Sculpted by Una Troubridge, the partner of Radclyffe Hall, this plaster bust shows the Ballets Russes dancer and choreographer, Vaslav Nijinsky as the faun in the ballet *L'après-midi d'un faun*. It was based on sketches made by Troubridge at the Ballets Russes rehearsals and was exhibited at the Fine Art Society in London in March 1914. Nijinsky originally owned it and it was cast in a series of four bronze versions. It depicts Nijinsky as a promiscuous faun, accentuating the dancer's features which were seen as exotic and much-admired by his many male fans.

V&A Theatre and Performance.

Given by Richard Buckle.



QUEER BRITISH ART 1861–1967

5 April – 1 October 2017

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 4
BLOOMSBURY AND
BEYOND

Please return to holder

The Bloomsbury Group of artists and writers famously 'lived in squares and loved in triangles'. Dora Carrington had relationships with men and women but loved and was loved by Lytton Strachey, who was attracted to men. Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell lived together in Charleston Farmhouse in East Sussex. A chosen few of Duncan Grant's male lovers made visits but Paul Roche was forced to camp on the South Downs as he did not meet with Bell's approval. Bell's husband Clive lived apart from her but they remained happily married. While sexual intimacy was valued by the Group, it was not the most important bond tying the members together. Their network was a profoundly queer experiment in modern living founded on radical honesty and mutual support.

Bloomsbury's matter-of-fact acceptance of same-sex desire was unusual but not unique. The objects in this room show a variety of different perspectives, from the quiet homeliness of Ethel Sands's **Tea with Sickert**, to Gluck's defiant self-portrait. Together, they reveal a generation of artists and sitters exploring, confronting and coming to terms with themselves and their desires.

Work labels

Clockwise from wall text

Clare Atwood 1866–1962

John Gielgud's Room

1933

Oil paint on canvas

N04881

This picture was painted in Sir John Gielgud's flat at the time he was playing Richard II in Gordon Daviot's **Richard of Bordeaux** at the New Theatre. Rather than emphasising his life in the public eye, this work draws attention to Gielgud's domestic life. In this way, Clare 'Tony' Atwood gently subverts traditional associations of the feminine with private space. Atwood lived in a **menage a trois** with Gielgud's second-cousin, Edith (Edy) Craig and the feminist playwright Christopher St John, who had previously lived together as an openly lesbian couple. St John later stated that 'the bond between Edy and me was strengthened not weakened by Tony's association with us'.

Tate. Presented by Mrs E.L. Shute 1937

Ethel Sands 1873–1962

The Chintz Couch

c.1910–11

Oil paint on board

N03845

This painting presents a chintz couch in the drawing room of Ethel Sands's home in Belgravia, which she shared with her lifelong partner and fellow artist, Nan Hudson. The eponymous sofa is complemented by a number of framed landscape paintings and a vase of delicately arranged white arum lilies, creating a harmonious composition and reflecting the artist's personal design tastes. Chintz was a material traditionally associated with femininity, as it was frequently used to furnish rooms under the jurisdiction of the woman, such as the sitting room. In Sands's own time, Vanessa Bell accused her work of 'fatal prettiness'. However, it is possible to interpret Sands's unashamed interest in domesticity as a celebration of the domestic space as a site of female experience and creativity.

Tate. Presented by the Contemporary Art Society 1924

Ethel Sands 1873–1962

Tea with Sickert

c.1911–12

Oil paint on canvas

T07808

The scene of this painting is the sitting room Nan Hudson and Sands's home. Although it features two figures – the artist Walter Sickert and Hudson – the table is set for afternoon tea for three. The composition of the painting is arranged as if the artist was standing behind Nan, and this perspective highlights their position as a couple. In 1912, the work was exhibited as part of Sands and Hudson's joint exhibition at the Carfax Gallery and it drew mixed reactions: **Westminster Gazette** called it 'a daring picture' but 'a somewhat overwhelming indulgence in pure orange vermillion'.

Tate. Bequeathed by Colonel Christopher Sands 2000,
accessioned 2001

Anna Hope Hudson 1869–1957

Chateau d'Auppegard

after 1927

Oil paint on board

T07810

Château d'Auppegard features a large 17th-century house ten miles from Dieppe, where Nan Hudson and Ethel Sands spent summers together. In 1923, the house was featured in *Vogue*, and in 1927 Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant were commissioned to decorate the walls of the building with murals. **Chateau d'Auppegard** was badly damaged during the Second World War, and for this reason, very few examples of Nan's work survives. This work is inscribed on the back of the canvas, 'Darling Ethel, from Nan', and was perhaps created as a gift to her partner.

Tate. Bequeathed by Colonel Christopher Sands 2000,
accessioned 2001

Gluck 1895–1978

Self-portrait

1942

Oil paint on canvas

X63265

Gluck locks gazes with the viewer in this unflinching self-portrait. Born Hannah Gluckstein, Gluck requested that the name Gluck be reproduced with 'no prefix, suffix or quotes'. Gluck exhibited to great acclaim at the 'The Gluck Room' of The Fine Art Society, where visitors included Queen Mary. This painting was painted in 1942, in a difficult period in Gluck's relationship with Nesta Obermer, Gluck's 'darling wife'. Obermer was frequently away, sometimes with her husband Seymour Obermer. In 1944, their relationship broke down and Gluck went to live with Edith Shackleton Herald. Their relationship lasted until Gluck's death.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Given by the sitter and artist, 'Gluck' (Hannah Gluckstein), 1973

Gluck 1895–1978

Lilac and Guelder Rose

1932–7

Oil paint on canvas

X63139

This was one of a number of flower paintings that Gluck made during and immediately after her relationship with society florist and author Constance Spry, who she met in 1932. Spry was a leading figure in cultivating a fashion for white flowers, and often used Gluck's paintings to illustrate her articles. Many of Spry's customers also commissioned flower paintings from Gluck. When **Lilac and Guelder Rose** was exhibited at Gluck's 1937 exhibition at the Fine Art Society, it was much admired by Lord Villiers, who remarked 'It's gorgeous, I feel I could bury my face in it'.

Glyn Warren Philpot 1884–1937

Man with a Gun

1933

Oil paint on canvas

X64194

Glyn Philpot developed a strong reputation as a society portraitist until the 1930s, at which point he began to explore modernist forms, as well as express his sexuality more openly. This work depicts Philpot's friend Jan Erland, who was the subject of a series of paintings by Philpot on the theme of sports and leisure. Erland is depicted cradling a gun which, he recalled, had been specifically borrowed for the occasion. Erland's firm grip on the gun's phallic barrel seems suggestive. Writing to his sister Daisy, Philpot described 'every moment with this dear Jan' as filled with 'inspiration and beauty'.

The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Bequeathed by Jeffrey Daniels, 1986

Ethel Walker 1861–1951

Decoration: The Excursion of Nausicaa

1920

Oil paint on canvas

N03885

The composition of this painting reveals Ethel Walker's fascination with Greco-Roman friezes, as well as the artistic possibilities of the female nude. The painting is inspired by Book IV of Homer's **Odyssey**, in which the princess Nausicaa bathes with her maidens. In 1900, Walker became the first woman member of the New English Arts Club, whose select committee reacted to this painting with 'spontaneous and enthusiastic applause'. There has been some speculation about the nature of Walker's relationship with painter Clara Christian, with whom she lived and worked in the 1880s, although little evidence survives. This image offers a utopian vision of an all-female community.

Tate. Purchased 1924

Duncan Grant 1885–1978

Bathing

1911

Oil paint on canvas

N04567

Bathing was conceived as part of a decorative scheme for the dining room at Borough Polytechnic, and it was Duncan Grant's first painting to receive widespread public attention. Grant's design takes inspiration from summers spent around the Serpentine in Hyde Park, which was one of a number of sites associated with London's queer culture. The painting celebrates the strength and beauty of the male form, and its homoerotic implications were not lost on Grant's contemporaries: the **National Review** described the dining room as a 'nightmare' which would have a 'degenerative' effect on the polytechnic's working-class students.

Tate. Purchased 1931

Case

Duncan Grant

Duncan Grant produced erotic works on paper prolifically throughout his life. These objects were created in private and for personal consumption only. Racially diverse figures are presented in various states of sexual play, and Grant's range of representation moves from explicit passion to tender post-coital repose. Overlapping bodies are depicted in impossible contortions, and the works reveal Grant's fascination with the artistic possibilities of the male form as well as the importance of harmonious composition. The objects also demonstrate a characteristically witty approach to sexuality, with some copulating figures playfully masquerading as ballet dancers and wrestlers. As his daughter Angelica Garnett recalled, one of Grant's favourite maxims was to 'never be ashamed', and his private erotica offers an unapologetic celebration of gay male sex and love.

Duncan Grant 1885–1978

Bathers by the Pond

1920–1

Oil paint on canvas

X64286

This painting shows a scene filled with homoerotic possibilities. The setting is possibly Charleston Farmhouse in East Sussex, where Duncan Grant lived with Vanessa Bell, her children and his lover David (Bunny) Garnett. Grant's use of dots of colour shows the influences of the pointillist technique pioneered by Georges Seurat. The nude figure in the foreground basks in the sun while the seated figures behind him exchange appreciative glances. Swimming ponds often served as cruising grounds and it is perhaps unsurprising that this work was not exhibited in Grant's lifetime.

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

(Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council 1985)

Duncan Grant 1885–1978

PC Harry Daley

1930

Oil paint on canvas

X64041

In December 1930, Duncan Grant wrote to Vanessa Bell, relating an evening 'with the cultivated policeman who is a friend of Raymond [Mortimer] and Morgan [the novelist E M Forster]'. He describes how they 'went to a series of parties at his friends' houses and drank a great deal of beer and danced hilariously'. This policeman was Harry Daley, depicted here in his uniform. Daley was from a working-class background and was stationed as a constable at Hammersmith. He was also E M Forster's lover and later wrote a memoir called **This Small Cloud** recounting his experiences on both sides of the law.

Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London

Edward Wolfe 1897–1982

Portrait of Pat Nelson

1930s

Oil paint on canvas

X52185

Patrick Nelson emigrated from Jamaica to North Wales in 1937, before settling in London to study law the following year. While living in Bloomsbury, Nelson worked as an artists' model and soon became acquainted with Edward Wolfe. Nelson would also meet other prominent gay artists at this time, including his sometime boyfriend and lifelong friend Duncan Grant. Wolfe's depiction of Nelson against the rich green background is exoticising and his pose invites the viewer to admire his body. Such objectification was typical of many depictions of black men from this time and reflects an uneven power dynamic, although Nelson's friendship with members of the Bloomsbury group adds a level of complexity to the relationship between artist and sitter.

James O'Connor

Dora Carrington 1893–1932

Lytton Strachey

1916

Oil paint on panel

X63264

Dora Carrington wrote in her diary after painting her close friend, the writer Lytton Strachey lying in bed: 'I would love to explore your mind behind your finely skinned forehead. You seem so wise and so coldly old. Yet in spite of this what a peace to be with you, and how happy I was today'. Strachey was almost exclusively attracted to men and Carrington had relationships with both men and women but they were inseparable. In 1921, Carrington married Ralph Partridge, with whom Strachey was in love, and the three lived in a **menage à trois** at Ham Spray House, Wiltshire.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Bequeathed by Frances Catherine Partridge (née Marshall),

2004

Duncan Grant 1885–1978

Paul Roche Reclining

c.1946

Oil paint on canvas

X64744

This painting depicts Duncan Grant's close friend and possible lover Paul Roche, lying as if asleep. He is depicted against a patterned background reminiscent of colours and fabrics produced by the Omega Workshop, the design collective founded in 1913 by Roger Fry. These soft textures contrast with Roche's bare torso, which is further emphasised by his briefs, socks and open shirt. Grant and Roche met by chance in July 1946: after making eye contact crossing the road at Piccadilly Circus, the two struck up a conversation. Their friendship lasted until Grant's death in 1978.

Glyn Warren Philpot 1884–1937

Henry Thomas

1934–5

Oil paint on canvas

X64285

Henry Thomas was Glyn Philpot's servant and one of his favourite models. The high-cheekboned angularity of Thomas's face is echoed in the diagonal lines of the abstracted background, perhaps an allusion to the batik fabric behind. The exact nature of Thomas and Philpot's relationship is unknown. Many of Philpot's depictions of Thomas carry a homoerotic charge and some are exoticising. What Thomas felt about his years with Philpot from 1929 to the artist's death in 1937 is unknown. The words he wrote on Philpot's funeral wreath, 'For memory to my dear master as well as my father and brother to me', hints at the imbalance between them, while also suggesting many complex layers of relationship.

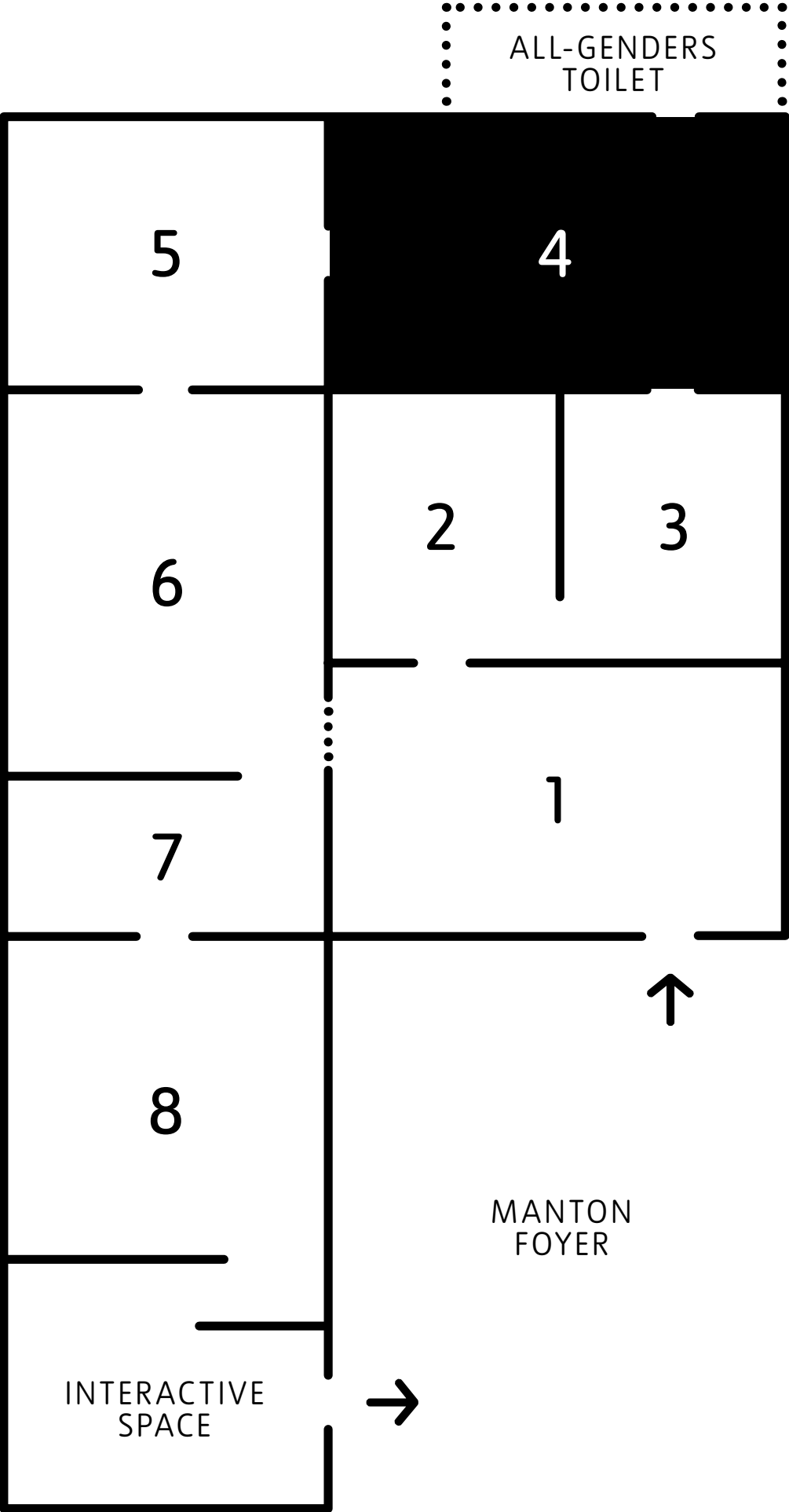
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

(Bequeathed by Mrs Rosemary Newgas, the neice of the artist 2004)

Glyn Warren Philpot 1884–1937
Repose on the Flight into Egypt
1922
Oil paint on canvas
T11861

Glyn Philpot brings an unusual interpretation to the subject of the Holy Family resting on the flight into Egypt by incorporating mythological figures including a sphinx, a satyr and three centaurs, who stand with their bodies entwined. Philpot's presentation of the mythological creatures alludes to pagan myths of unrestrained sexuality, and the implication is that this will be replaced by the new religion of Christianity. A phallic flowering cactus appears in the foreground of the painting and the Holy Family shelter against the over-sized figure of a black man, possibly Philpot's servant Henry Thomas. He is depicted lying down, his head thrown back as if asleep or perhaps in orgasm. This dream-like work has been interpreted as an attempt by Philpot to reconcile his adopted Catholicism and his sexual attraction to other men.

Tate. Purchased 2004



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LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 5 DEFYING CONVENTION

Please return to holder

This room shows how artists and writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century challenged gender norms. Some, such as Laura Knight, laid claim to traditionally masculine sources of artistic authority by depicting themselves in the act of painting nude female models. Others, such as Vita Sackville-West, had open marriages and same-sex relationships, or, like Claude Cahun, questioned the very concept of gender binaries.

This was a period of radical social change. Women took on new roles during the First and Second World Wars, and gained the vote in 1918. Sackville-West worked with the Land Girls. Cahun resisted the Nazis on Jersey and was sentenced to death, imprisoned for a year and only freed by the end of the war. New fashions developed. For women, wearing trousers in public became stylishly avant-garde. Expectations were changing.

Public discussion about female same-sex desire offered ways of viewing the self, but it also brought problems. Lives that had previously passed without comment might now be labelled transgressive. But for some, this was a time of liberating possibilities.

Work labels

Anti clockwise from wall text

Case

Left to right

Man Ray 1890–1976

Virginia Woolf

1934

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X63333

Virginia Woolf is shown here at the height of her fame as author of the 1929 essay **A Room of One's Own** and novels including **Mrs Dalloway** 1925, **To the Lighthouse** 1927 and **Orlando** 1928. She agreed to sit for Man Ray in 1934 after visiting his exhibition at Lund Humphries in London. Man Ray recounted: 'I had to put lipstick on her mouth, to which she objected at first, but I explained that it was for technical reasons and would not show in the picture.' This was Woolf's husband Leonard's favourite portrait of her.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Virginia Woolf 1882–1941

Orlando: a biography

1928

Third edition, published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf
at the Hogarth Press, 52 Tavistock Square, London

X65442

Born a boy in the Elizabethan age, the novel's hero Orlando lives through the following centuries without aging and mysteriously changes gender, waking up to discover she is now a girl. The character of Orlando was based on Woolf's lover Vita Sackville-West, depicted here in one of the illustrations. Sackville-West's open marriage to Harold Nicolson gave them both freedom to pursue same-sex relationships. When **Orlando** was published, Sackville-West's mother tried to prevent it from being reviewed because "I have spent years, hiding what Harold and Vita really are". Despite Orlando's complex themes of gender identity and sexuality, the novel was not banned.

Private collection

John Singer Sargent 1856–1925

Vernon Lee

1881

Oil paint on canvas

N04787

Born Violet Paget, Paget took the name 'Vernon Lee' to disguise her gender as an author. A friend of John Singer Sargent from childhood, Lee described this portrait as 'more like me than I expected anything could – rather fierce & cantankerous.' Lee had a passionate relationship with the writer Mary F Robinson whose portrait Sargent painted in 1885 as pair to this image. Lee told Robinson she would have proposed if she had been a man, and the sexologist Havelock Ellis considered using the couple as a case study for 'female inversion'. In 1887, Robinson married, leaving Lee devastated. Lee forged a relationship with Clementina 'Kit' Anstruther Thomson, who assisted with Lee's work on aesthetic experience. Lee's apparently androgynous appearance in this image has aroused comment but is in keeping with fashions of the time.

Tate. Bequeathed by Miss Vernon Lee through Miss Cooper Willis 1935

Alvaro Guevara 1894–1951

Dame Edith Sitwell

1916

Oil paint on canvas

N03509

The poet Edith Sitwell does not seem to have had sexual relationships but was viciously satirised by the artist and writer Wyndham Lewis as a lesbian. Sitwell described the life of the artist as 'very Pauline', referring to the letters of St Paul, which may suggest she thought sex would be a distraction. She was close friends with Alvaro Guevara, the artist of this portrait, who had relationships with men and women. Diana Holman Hunt in her 1974 biography of Guevara suggested that Sitwell and Guevara shared a love that was 'not physical but certainly romantic and spiritual.' The bright colours reflect the designs of Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell's Omega Workshops and Sitwell is sitting on a dining chair designed by Fry.

Tate. Presented by Lord Duveen, Walter Taylor and George Eumorfopoulos through the Art Fund 1920

William Strang 1859–1921

Lady with a Red Hat

1918

Oil paint on canvas

X63138

This portrait is of writer Vita Sackville-West. According to her son, Nigel Nicolson, she attended sittings with her lover Violet Trefusis. Sackville-West adopted a male persona, 'Julian', at some points in this relationship, allowing her and Trefusis to pose as a married couple so they could stay together at a boarding-house. Her fashionable dress in this image, however, gives no sign of such androgynous role-playing. The book in Sackville-West's hand may refer to her book **Poems of East and West** 1917. At the time this was painted she was writing **Challenge**, a novel about her relationship with Trefusis, but this was not published until 1974.

Lent by Glasgow Life (Glasgow Museums) on behalf
of Glasgow City Council. Purchased 1919

Cecile Walton 1891–1956

Romance

1920

Oil paint on hardboard laid on plywood

X63262

Cecile Walton's semi-nudity makes this a strikingly unconventional self-portrait. Its composition alludes to Edouard Manet's **Olympia** 1863, a controversial depiction of a sex worker. Walton may be using this reference point to hint at the contradictory nature of traditional expectations of women: as lover, mother (implied by the presence of her children) and carer (suggested by the presence of the nurse). Yet she depicts herself as detached from all three roles, viewing her son with cool appraisal. When the image was exhibited in 1920, critical responses were mixed, one commentator remarking on its 'frank treatment of an intimate subject'.

Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

Given anonymously 1995

Laura Knight 1877–1970

Self-portrait

1913

Oil paint on canvas

X63266

When this painting was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1913, the reviewer Claude Phillips wrote 'it repels, not by any special inconvenience – for it is harmless enough and with an element of sensuous attraction – but by dullness and something dangerously close to vulgarity'. His strong reaction hints at anxieties over women painting the female nude, which subverted the hierarchy of male artist and female model. When Laura Knight was at art school women were not been allowed to attend life classes. Her sensuous depiction of herself painting Ella Naper, a friend, lays claim to a professional artistic identity. In 1936, Knight was the first woman to become an Academician since its foundation.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Dorothy Johnstone 1892–1980

Rest Time in the Life Class

1923

Oil paint on canvas

X63248

This image depicts the life-class Johnstone taught for women at Edinburgh College of Art, which Johnstone presents as a space of friendship and collaboration. In the foreground, one woman comments on another's drawing while in the background, Johnstone depicts herself gesturing towards the canvas. Johnstone had an intense relationship with Cecile Walton and Walton's husband Eric Robertson, who were also part of the Edinburgh Group of artists. She later married fellow artist David Macbeth Sutherland.

City Art Centre, City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries

Dora Carrington 1893–1932

Female Figure Lying on her Back

1912

Oil paint on canvas

X63255

This sensuous life study by Dora Carrington won second prize in a life-drawing competition at the Slade School of Art, where Carrington was a student from 1910–1914. Carrington would later have affairs with women, most notably heiress Henrietta Bingham, and it may be tempting to read a lesbian sensibility into this languid image, although at this stage in her life, desire seems to have made Carrington uncomfortable. The dark background focuses the viewer's attention on the model's body, particularly the stark whiteness of her breasts which contrast with her flushed cheeks and softer flesh tones.

UCL Art Museum, University College London

Marlow Moss 1889–1958

Balanced Forms in Gunmetal on Cornish Granite

1956–7

Metal and granite

T01114

Marlow Moss 1889–1958

Composition in Yellow, Black and White

1949

Oil paint and wood on canvas

T01113

Raised as 'Marjorie Moss', Marlow Moss told how in 1923 'I destroyed my old personality and created a new one'. Moss's androgynous appearance completed this transformation. In 1927, Moss moved to Paris and fell in love with the writer A.H.'Netty' Nijhoff. Moss met Piet Mondrian in 1929 and began to experiment with constructivism. Forced by the Second World War to return to England in 1940, Moss continued to experiment, adding strips of wood to the canvas to give form to the compositions. **Composition White, Black and Yellow** is from this series. Moss also began to make abstract sculptures, using basic forms such as a cone, sphere and spiral (see **Balanced Forms in Gunmetal on Cornish Granite** in the case nearby).

Tate. Presented by Miss Erica Brausen 1969

Claude Cahun 1894–1954

Untitled

1936

2 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

P79317–8

These images (to the left and right of **I Extend My Arms**), from a larger group of photographs, hint at different narrative possibilities for the sexless manikin. In one, the doll seems to take on a feminine air, posed as if delighting in the long hair that trails round its body. The other is less overtly gendered, wearing a hat made from an upright feather and holding aloft a tiny plant. The porcelain dolls' heads outside the jar in one image are reminiscent of the masks that repeated occur in Cahun's work and these images seem to hint at the themes of role-playing that Cahun explored in earlier self-portraits.

Tate. Purchased 2007

Claude Cahun 1894–1954

I Extend My Arms

1931 or 1932

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

P79319

As in many of Cahun's photographs, the artist's body is here used to theatrical effect. Cahun's arms emerge from a rough-hewn monolith, the fingers of the hands splayed in a dramatic gesture. The beaded bangles on Cahun's arms and the totemic form of the stone may reference modernism's 'primitivist' interest in non-western cultures. Yet the incongruous relationship between Cahun's supple flesh and the solid stone coupled with the melodrama of Cahun's waving hands give this image an air of surreal comedy.

Tate. Purchased 2007

Claude Cahun 1894–1954

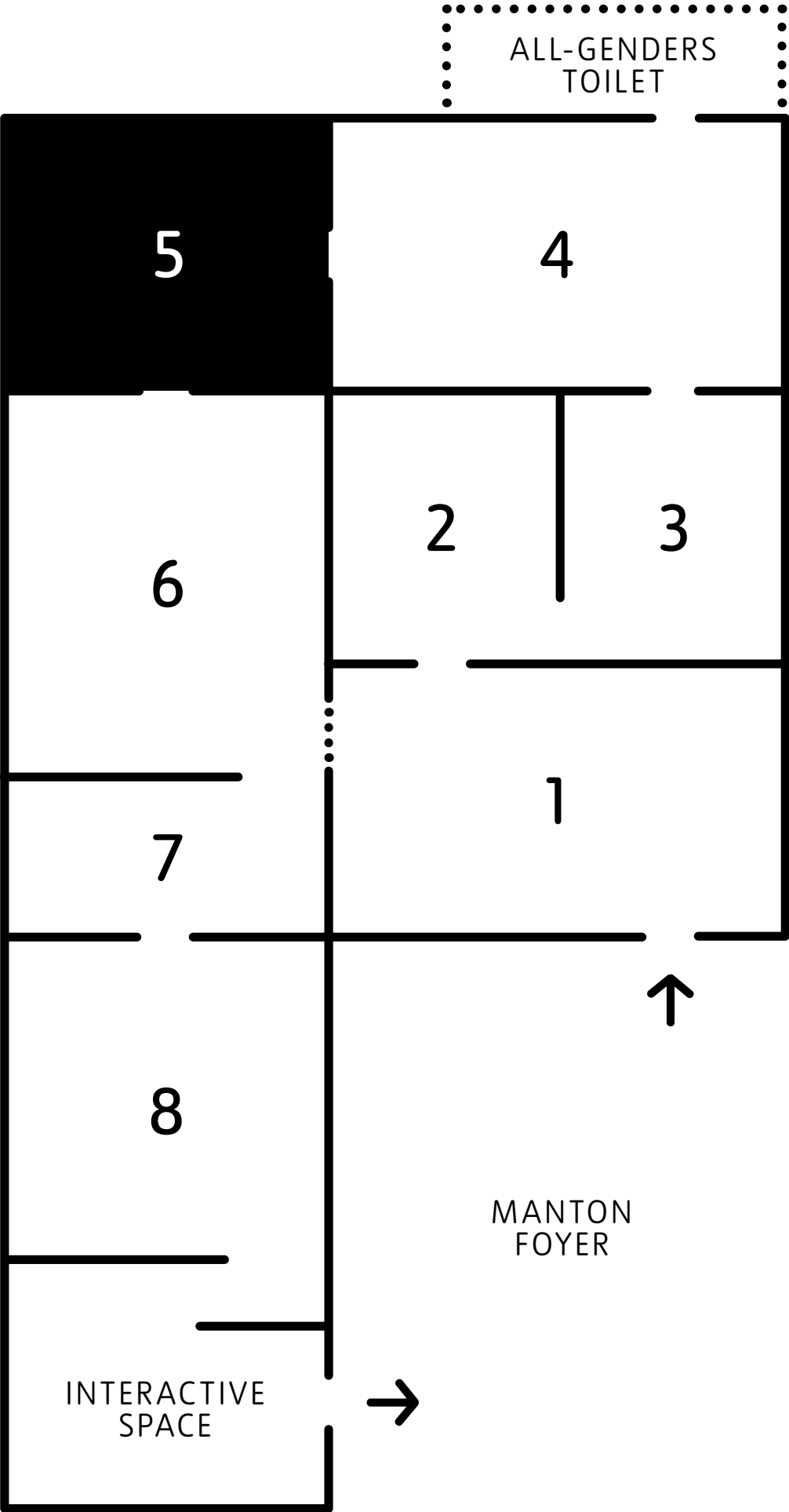
Illustration from *Aveux non avenus*

Disavowelled Concessions

1930

X65328

This book is a collage of narrative text, poems and descriptions of dreams. It was illustrated with photo montages made in collaboration with Claude Cahun's lover (and step-sister) Marcel Moore. In the text and illustrations, Cahun explored the situational nature of gender, saying, 'Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neuter is the only gender that always suits me.' Here, images of different roles from plays, artworks, such as Michaelangelo's David, and historical figures fan out from the young Cahun. Cahun presented a copy of the book to the sexologist Havelock Ellis, "who has been a warm light on my desolate path.'



QUEER BRITISH ART 1861–1967

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LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 6 ARCADIA AND SOHO

Please return to holder

London was a magnet for artists. In the 1950s and 1960s, Soho was the epicentre of queer culture, described by Francis Bacon as 'the sexual gymnasium of the city'. Many of the artists shown in this room were friends, often living in London, sometimes sharing studios. Several were encouraged by the patron and collector Peter Watson, founder of the influential literary magazine **Horizon** and co-founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts. Their work was often inspired by travel: to the Mediterranean, to coastal Brittany, or to the seedy American bars that inspired works such as Edward Burra's **Izzy Orts**.

John Craxton, John Minton and Keith Vaughan have been described as 'neo-romantics'. Craxton, however, preferred the term 'Arcadian', referencing a classical utopian vision of a harmonious wilderness, populated by innocent shepherds. Yet, while it is idealised, depictions of Arcadia still sometimes include references to death and its peace can be disrupted by undercurrents of desire.

Work labels

Clockwise from main wall text

Christopher Wood 1901–1930

Nude Boy in a Bedroom

1930

Oil paint on hardboard laid on plywood

X64434

Christopher Wood's **Nude Boy in a Bedroom** depicts the artist's friend and sometime lover Francis Rose, in a hotel room in Brittany where they stayed with a group of friends in 1930. The group was later joined by Wood's mistress, Frosca Munster. According to Rose, the work 'is a nude painting of me washing at a basin' in which Wood 'scattered playing cards on the bed '. The cards are tarot cards and the top card shows the Page of Cups reversed, symbolising anxiety about a deception that will be soon discovered, or referring to someone incapable of making commitments. Wood may have included these cards as an oblique reference to his ongoing relationships with his male lover and female mistress.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

Robert Colquhoun 1914–1962

Actors on a Stage

1945

Oil paint on canvas

X63330

This painting is one of a series from 1945–6 representing performers and spectators, often as male pairs, sometimes embracing. 'Being theatrical' was often associated with same-sex desire and this image may have autobiographical associations. From 1933, Robert Colquhoun was in a relationship with the Scottish painter Robert MacBryde.

This was an 'open secret' but was not widely acknowledged because of the risk of imprisonment. 'Acting' could also be a metaphor for passing as 'straight' in public. **Actors on a Stage** was significant for Colquhoun and was sent from the USA for his 1958 show at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Private collection

Edward Burra 1905–1976

Soldiers at Rye

1941

Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper

N05377

Edward Burra based **Soldiers at Rye** on sketches of troops around his home town of Rye between September and October 1940. His macabre sensibility was informed by his experiences in the Spanish Civil War. In the final stages of painting, he added red and yellow Venetian carnival masks, giving the figures the air of predatory birds – a regular symbol in Burra's work from the 1930s. Seen from behind, the soldiers' close-fitting uniforms and bulbous physiques led one critic to comment that they had the 'bulging husky leathery shape' of 'military ruffians'. There is an ominous atmosphere to the painting, conveying a dangerous homoeroticism.

Tate. Presented by Studio 1942

Edward Burra 1905–1976

Costume designs for 'Rio Grande'

1928–9

Watercolour on paper

X63311, X66203–4

Edward Burra made these costume designs for the ballet 'Rio Grande: A Day in a Southern Port' in 1931. The ballet was based on a poem by Sacheverell Sitwell, and it was choreographed by Frederick Ashton with jazz-influenced music by Constant Lambert. Inspired by the French ports of Marseille and Toulon, the ballet was an ideal opportunity for Burra to showcase the homoerotic allure of the sailor, a recurrent theme in his work. The sequinned and feathered costumes he designed scandalised reviewers at the time, with Cyril Beaumont remarking on 'the skin-tight bodices' and 'bare thighs'. Typically, Burra revelled in the buzz he created.

Edward Burra 1905–1976

Izzy Orts

1937

Watercolour and pencil on paper

X63263

Izzy Orts was a popular dance hall in the Boston docks to which Edward Burra had been introduced by his poet friend, Conrad Aiken. On his second visit to Boston in 1937, Burra stayed with Aiken in Charlestown and he painted the crowded dance hall with its swing jazz band, jiving dancers and eclectic clientele. Given its dockland location, the club was a popular site for on-leave American sailors. These were figures of great sexual attraction to their many straight and queer admirers, and their racy reputation was enhanced by their tight-fitting navy uniforms, muscular physiques and fabled portside promiscuity.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

John Craxton 1922–2009

Pastoral for P.W.

1948

Oil paint on canvas

T03838

Pastoral for P.W. was a gift dedicated to John Craxton's friend Peter Watson, who he met in 1941 and who, like Craxton, was attracted to men. Watson was an art collector, aesthete and editor of the influential arts magazine **Horizon**. The painting was conceived as a group of 'capricious portraits' of Watson's friends as 'goats' enthralled by the flute-playing goatherd, set in the brilliantly lit Cretan landscape that Craxton had first visited in 1947. Lone shepherds were a recurrent theme in Craxton's work from this period. He said of them 'they were my means of escape and a sort of self-protection...I wanted to safeguard a world of private mystery.'

Tate. Purchased 1984

John Minton 1917–1957
Cornish Boy at a Window
1948
Oil paint on canvas
X63316

The bare-armed wistful youth in this portrait is Eric Verrico, who was one of John Minton's pupils at Camberwell School of Arts and Design. Minton took up this job shortly after his discharge from military service on psychological grounds. In London, he shared a studio with Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde and, later, Keith Vaughan. Verrico was a central figure in an inner group of male students at Camberwell who became known as 'Johnny's Circus'. He posed for several portraits and visited Cornwall with Minton in 1948.

Lent by the UK Government Art Collection

John Craxton 1922–2009

Head of a Cretan Sailor

1946

Oil paint on board

X64749

The sitter in this portrait was on national service in the Greek Navy when he first met John Craxton in a taverna in Poros. He caught Craxton's eye with his performance of the Greek dance the zeibékiko, with 'spendidly controlled steps, clicking his thumbs and forefingers and circling round and round in his white uniform like a seagull.' Craxton followed him to Crete in 1947, where the sailor was now working as a butcher in Herákleion. The island was a revelation and Craxton returned often, eventually partly settling there in 1960.

On loan from the London Borough of Camden Art Collection

Robert Medley 1905–1994

Summer Eclogue No. 1: Cyclists

1950

Oil paint on canvas

T06549

Exhibited at the Hanover Gallery in February 1950, Robert Medley's painting of racing cyclists on a summer's evening in a Gravesend public park underscores his attraction to cross-class sociability. The river esplanade offers a permissible space for observing the muscular bodies and taut limbs of the youths and their admirers. The title refers to Virgil's **Eclogues**, in which pastoral tranquillity is disrupted by erotic forces and revolutionary change. Medley wrote in his autobiography that the eclogue theme provided for 'a more contemporary subject matter'. One of the cyclists was modelled on fellow artist Keith Vaughan's lover, Ramsay McClure.

Tate. Purchased 1992

Keith Vaughan 1912–1977

Kouros

1960

Oil paint on canvas

X63309

In a diary entry for 1956, Keith Vaughan wrote of 'A silver bromide image of Johnny standing naked in my studio, aloof, slightly tense, withdrawn like a Greek Kouros, gazing apprehensively at himself in the mirror, lithe, beautiful.... it lies tormenting me on my table' This was a photograph of Vaughan's lover Johnny Walsh who is also represented in this painting. A 'Kouros' was a free-standing ancient Greek sculpture of a male youth and the image may also have been inspired by a visit Vaughan made to Greece in 1960.

Private collection

Keith Vaughan 1912–1977

Three Figures

1960–1

Oil paint on board

X63308

Three Figures is typical of Keith Vaughan's approach to group figure painting. The subjects are depicted in indeterminate locations and the lack of details makes it impossible to identify them or guess at their social class or profession. The close proximity of the figures in this image and the contrast between the nudity of the man with his back towards us and the other two men might suggest that this is an erotic encounter. Yet the composition remains intentionally enigmatic.

Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Lakeland Arts Trust, Kendal, Cumbria

Keith Vaughan 1912–1977

Bather: August 4th 1961

1961

Oil paint on canvas

T00502

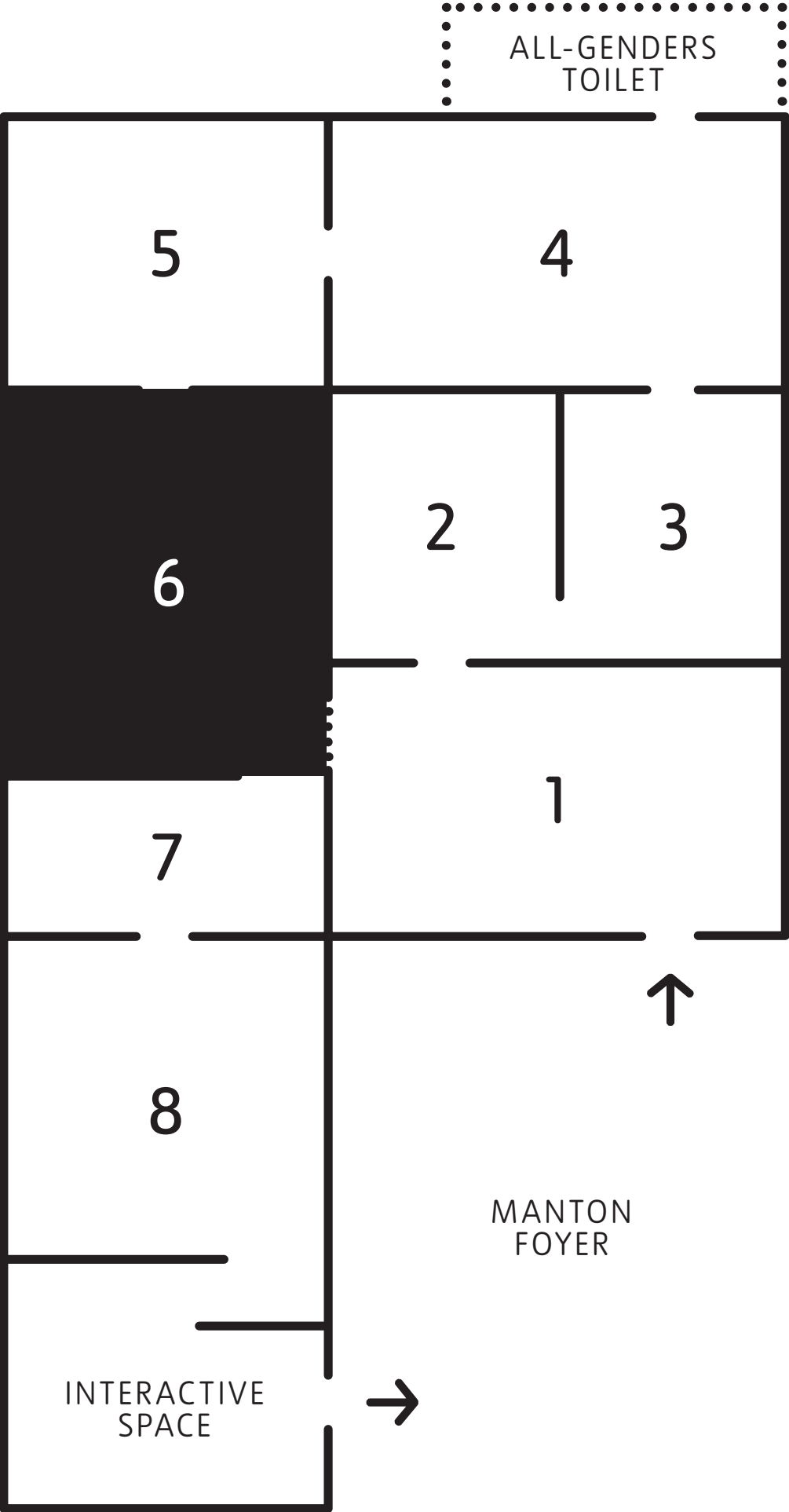
Keith Vaughan wrote in his journal, 'The continual use of the male figure...retains always the stain of a homosexual conception... K.V. paints nude young men". Perfectly true, but I feel I must hide my head in shame. Inescapable, I suppose – social guilt of the invert.' He wrestled with the competing impulses of figuration and abstraction in his work, describing how: 'I wanted to go beyond the specific, identifiable image – yet I did not want to do an "abstract" painting. **Bather: August 4th 1961** was the first break through. Every attempt up to then had finally resolved itself into another figure painting or an "abstract".'

Tate. Purchased 1962

Case

Keith Vaughan

In contrast over his concerns whether his desires would be shown in his paintings, Keith Vaughan's private drawings are explicitly erotic. Across them he depicts a range of different encounters, from sadomasochistic fantasies through to moments of tender intimacy. This is perhaps a hint of these fluctuating desires in his descriptions of relationship with his lover Jonny Walsh, of which Vaughan said, 'I can move from tenderness to sadism in the same harmonic key'.



QUEER BRITISH ART 1861–1967

5 April – 1 October 2017

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 7 PUBLIC/PRIVATE LIVES

Please return to holder

This room explores the contradictions of queer life in the 1950s and 1960s. Before the partial decriminalisation of sex between men in 1967, the boundaries between public and private were acutely important to couples in same-sex relationships. Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell had separate beds in their tiny flat to maintain the pretence that they weren't a couple.

Such caution was justified. Peter Wildeblood, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and Michael Pitt-Rivers were sent to jail in a case that became a rallying point for calls to change the law, which was increasingly attacked as a 'blackmailer's charter'. Lesbianism was not illegal, but women faced prejudice. Avant-garde photographer Barbara Ker-Seymer was thrown out of her room after she left a copy of Radclyffe Hall's banned book **The Well of Loneliness** out in plain sight. Yet despite the threat of exposure, couples lived happily together, community flourished, and a few even became queer celebrities.

Work labels

Clockwise from wall text

Stephen Tennant 1906–1986

Lascar, a story of the Maritime Boulevard

Ink, watercolour and collage on paper

X65414

In this illustration for Stephen Tennant's novel **Lascar** a riotous collage of burly sailors, bright flowers, letters and visiting cards seem to burst forth from the page. Some of Tennant's initial sketches of sailors were made on visits to the Old Port of Marseilles in the 1930s, but he constantly reworked the illustrations and text, never completing it. In the last two decades of his life, visitors to Wilsford Manor in Wiltshire where Tennant lived in virtual seclusion, found pages of the novel strewn across the decaying interiors.

The Viktor Wynd Museum of Curiosities,
Fine Art & Natural History, London

Valentine Penrose 1898–1978

Dons des feminines

1951

X63301

Born Valentine Bou  , Valentine Penrose was an artist and surrealist poet who was married to the British painter Roland Penrose. **Dons Des Feminines** tells of the travels and love affair of Maria Elona and Rubia in a series of poems and collages made from 19th century fashion plates. The gothic landscapes in many of the images have thinly veiled lesbian or vaginal imagery, as in the curtained cave in this illustration. The relationship celebrated in the book may be semi-autobiographical. In 1937, Penrose divorced her husband and travelled round India with the poet Alice Rahon, the probable inspiration for Rubia.

Victoria and Albert Museum

Because We're Queers

Between 1959 and 1962, couple Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell borrowed and stole books from libraries around Islington. They cut out some of the illustrations, which they used to paper the walls of their flat and to create new collaged covers for the books. They then returned the volumes to the shelves of the libraries and waited to watch reactions.

The covers they created are full of jokes and references to queer culture. The addition of wrestling men turns **Queen's Favourite** into an innuendo. Acting family the Lunts become kitsch glass figurines, while **The Secret of Chimneys** is depicted as a pair of giant cats. Others were more explicit: **The World of Paul Slickey** gains not only a phallic budgerigar but also a cut out shape of an erect penis. The plays of Emlyn Williams are retitled **Knickers must fall** and **Fucked by Monty**.

Orton and Halliwell were eventually caught and jailed for six months for 'malicious damage', which Orton claimed was 'because we're queers'. Prison destroyed Halliwell. While Orton became a successful playwright, Halliwell became an alcoholic. In 1967, he killed Orton and took his own life. Yet while their lives ended in tragedy, the bookcovers give insight into a playful and subversive relationship.

Kenneth Halliwell 1926–1967

Untitled

1967

Printed papers on hardboard

T14635

This is one of 19 collages that Halliwell exhibited at the Anno Domino gallery in 1967. Unlike the earlier book-covers, these were made by Halliwell alone, yet they are similarly kaleidoscopic in their use of images. An archeological artefact here sits alongside fashion photography, sea-shells, insects and words from newspapers and magazines. Some of these juxtapositions are playful: 'Eye' appears where an eye would be. Others are more obscure and the phrases 'Blackmail' and 'dirty word' perhaps hint at oppression. The exhibition was a failure and Halliwell's professional frustration contributed to the breakdown of his relationship with Orton, who was now established as a playwright.

Tate. Purchased 2016

Lewis Morley 1925–2013

Joe Orton

1965

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X10059

This was taken as a publicity image for Joe Orton's play **Entertaining Mr Sloane**. Morley told how 'they were to be body-building type shots, as [Orton] wanted it to be known that he was the fittest, best built playwright in the western hemisphere. ... When I was finally confronted by a slim youth, wearing a pair of ever-so-slightly stained Aertex underpants, I was ever-so-slightly shocked.' This image is the queerest iteration of Morley's most famous composition, his 1963 photograph of Christine Keeler. In contrast to Keeler's more seductive pose, Orton appears relaxed and at ease with his apparent nudity.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

Given by Lewis Morley, 1984

Patrick Procktor 1936–2003

Joe Orton

1967

Ink on paper

X63331

This drawing appears to be an intimate image of Joe Orton, yet it was commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre, to be reproduced in a programme. Procktor's line is deft and he captures details such as Orton's bird tattoo. Orton's gaze seems expectant and his hand preserves his modesty but also hints at more erotic possibilities. Orton described the sitting: 'He drew me lying on the bed . . . I kept my socks on, because I think they're sexy. "I've drawn you looking like a beautiful teenager", Procktor said. "You'll get a lot of kinky letters after this, I'm sure."'

National Portrait Gallery, London

Patrick Procktor 1936–2003

Derek Talking to me about Orpheus

1967

Watercolour on paper

X64015

Patrick Procktor's painting depicts his friend and fellow artist and film-maker Derek Jarman. The two artists met while Jarman was studying at the Slade. Older, more assured and, at this point in their lives, more comfortable with his sexuality, Procktor made a deep impression on Jarman and the two became lovers. Procktor gave Jarman one of his paintings, **The Black Set** 1963, which Jarman later hung over his bed in his house at Dungeness, Kent. Jarman would go on to play Procktor in Stephen Frear's film **Prick Up Your Ears** 1987, which told the story of the playwright Joe Orton.

From 1 May Derek Jarman's film **Blue** 1993 will form a Spotlight display at Tate Britain.

Private collection, London

Angus McBean 1904–1990

Quentin Crisp

1941

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63267

Angus McBean met the writer and raconteur Quentin Crisp while walking in the blackout in 1941 and the two became lovers. McBean later said of Crisp, 'He was really one of the most beautiful people I have ever photographed. It was a completely androgynous beauty and under different circumstances it would have been difficult to know what sex he was.' This ambiguity is captured in McBean's photograph, which is posed to emphasise Crisp's long lashes, glossy lips and elaborate ring, the position of which is suggestive of an earring. Crisp's refusal to conform to traditional masculine appearance was courageous and unswerving.

National Portrait Gallery, London

John Deakin 1912–1972

Colin

c.1950s

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X66415

We don't know anything about this the sitter in this portrait. Deakin's friend Bruce Bernard, who catalogued John Deakin's negatives, likely gave it the label 'Colin', perhaps from memory, perhaps from an original sleeve note by Deakin. It is therefore not clear whether it depicts a drag performance or whether the glamorous outfit reflects the sitter's true identity. It is, however, shot in a domestic setting rather than on the stage, leaving open the possibility that it depicts the sitter's lived experience.

John Deakin 1912–1972

Muriel Belcher in the Colony Room

c.1955

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X66412

Muriel Belcher was the notorious proprietor of the Soho pub the Colony Room, founded in 1948. Belcher initially gave the artist Francis Bacon £10 a week and free drinks to help drum up trade. Belcher had numerous relationships with men and women and was famously camp, referring to her customers as her 'daughters' and virtually all men as 'she'. Newcomers to the pub who didn't impress were dismissed with a savage put-down.

John Deakin 1912–1972

Francis Bacon

c.1960s

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X66414

The artist Francis Bacon and John Deakin were friends and drinking partners. Deakin boasted that Bacon called him the funniest man in London. Both shared an uncompromising approach to sitters and Bacon commissioned photographs from Deakin and drew on them as a visual resource for some of his paintings. Deakin used a Rolleiflex camera, likely making this double exposure a deliberate effect. The instability that it gives the image is open to interpretation as a queer effect. Deakin used this technique in other images.

John Deakin 1912–1972

Celia 'Sammy' Short

1939

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X66416

Celia Short, known as Sammy, was a lesbian friend of John Deakin and Barbara Ker-Seymer. Although this image is one of a series that Deakin called his 'drag' pictures and is labelled 'transvestite' by Bruce Bernard, recent research has revealed they actually depict a group of women dressed in drag costumes. These women also appear in Barbara Ker-Seymer's photograph albums, suggesting that they were part of the same circle.

John Deakin 1912–1972

The Two Roberts Asleep - Colquhoun and MacBryde

c.1953

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X66413

Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde are here shown asleep on each other shoulders in a moment of tender intimacy. They had met on their first day at Glasgow School of Art and became lovers and lifelong partners. This photograph was probably taken at Tilty Mill, the home of the writer Elizabeth Smart, who invited Colquhoun and MacBryde to live with her and her partner the poet George Barker, when they'd been evicted from their studio in London. They spent the next four years there, combining painting with helping to raise Smart and Barker's four children. The edges of the image show evidence of fire damage from some forgotten occasion.

John Deakin 1912–1972

Paul Danquah

c.1950s

Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

X66390

Paul Danquah made his acting debut in the 1961 film of Shelagh Delaney's **A Taste of Honey**, which contained one of the first positive depictions of a queer character on the screen. This photograph was taken in the flat in Overstrand mansions he shared with his lifelong partner Peter Pollock. They were together for 56 years. Francis Bacon also lived with them for a time, and they all holidayed together in Tangier, where Danquah and Pollock eventually moved.

John Deakin

John Deakin seems almost to embody queer Soho of the 1950s. A close friend and drinking companion of Francis Bacon, his portrait photographs include many artists, actors, poets and celebrities. His style was often startlingly unflattering, capturing his sitters as they truly were. He said of his work, 'Being fatally drawn to the human race, what I want to do when I take a photograph is make a revelation about it. So my sitters turn into my victims.' Deakin admitted to a drink problem which led to a chequered career and was twice sacked from Vogue. After his death, many of his photographic negatives were found in a box under his bed and were saved by his friend, writer and picture editor Bruce Bernard.

Case

Montague Glover

Ralph Hall

Facsimile reproduction

Z07355

This photograph depicts Ralph Hall, the lover and, ostensibly at least, servant of amateur photographer, Montague Glover. Glover and Hall met around 1930. Hall was a blond labourer from the East End, while Glover was middle class, fifteen years older and had served in the First World War. They fell in love and Glover's enormous archive of images of the working class men that he fetishised includes numerous photographs of Hall: in his army uniform, in labouring clothes, on the streets and in bed. This private archive bears witness to a loving relationship and to a widespread queer culture.

Courtesy of Neil Bartlett and James Gardiner

Letter from Ralph Hall to Montague Glover

X66389

Neil Bartlett and James Gardiner Collection

The relationship between Ralph Hall and Montague 'Monty' Glover is extraordinary not only for the range of images it contains but also the frank letters that the couple exchanged. These include passionate declarations of their love for each other – even in letters sent during Ralph's military service, which are marked as 'passed' by the censor. Ralph and Monty lived together happily and comparatively openly for over fifty years. On Monty's death, Ralph inherited their house and its contents.

Richard Chopping 1917–2008

The Fly

1965

X66447

From the archive of Jon Lys Turner

Richard Chopping was best-known to the public as the creator of the striking cover designs of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. His design for his own novel **The Fly** was similarly bold, and was made even more unsettling when he turned his original drawing upside down on the advice of his lover, artist Denis Wirth-Miller. A macabre novel, its explicit queer themes became its selling point. The reviews told how 'Lust, aberration and death are treated in the Grand Guignol manner'.

Case

Letter from Denis Wirth-Miller to Richard Chopping

12 November 1944

X64021

This letter was sent by Denis Wirth-Miller to Richard Chopping from Wormward Scrubs, where he had been sent in 1944 after being sentenced to nine weeks for gross indecency. He protested his innocence but was not believed. He had to be careful not to say anything that might reveal his love for Chopping in his letters, as this would have put Chopping at risk. Nonetheless, the depth of their affection shines through.

Richard Chopping and Denis Wirth-Miller

Facsimile reproduction

Z07350

Courtesy of John Lys Turner

The artists Richard Chopping and Denis Wirth-Miller met in 1937 and fell in love. They remained together until Chopping's death in 2008. This photograph shows them at their home at Wivenhoe, which they bought together in 1944. Here, they were regularly visited by friends such as John Craxton, Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde, and Francis Bacon, who shared a studio with Wirth-Miller for a time. In defiance of the law, they lived openly as a couple and finally celebrated their civil partnership in 2005.

Richard Chopping

**Valentine's Day Card from Richard Chopping to Denis
Worth-Miller**

X64022

From the archive of John Lys Turner

This Valentine's Day card exchanged between Chopping and Wirth-Miller is a rebus or pictogram. When decoded, it reads 'I love you'.

Box of Buttons

Various dates

X64020

These buttons were collected by Richard Chopping and Denis Wirth-Miller as mementos of liaisons with soldiers who were stationed near their home at Wivenhoe. There are over two hundred buttons in the box.

John Minton 1917–1957

Horseguards in their Dressing Rooms at Whitehall

1953

Lithograph on paper

P77471

In the 1950s, off-duty guardsmen had a reputation for engaging in casual sex work. It is therefore perhaps surprising that John Minton submitted this image of young guardsman in barracks for a series commissioned by the Royal College of Art in 1953 to mark Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. Minton was attracted to men and recorded many of his sexual encounters in his journal. In this context, the intimacy of the scene, the Guardsman's bare feet and the objects on the bed have a potentially erotic significance that would have been recognisable to viewers who shared Minton's desires.

Tate. Purchased 1990

Photographer unknown for Keystone Press Agency Ltd
Michael Fox-Pitt-Rivers; Edward Douglas-Scott-Montagu,
3rd Baron Montagu of Beaulieu; Peter Wildeblood

24 March 1954

Photograph, bromide print on paper

X63362

This image captures Peter Wildeblood, Michael Pitt-Rivers and Edward Montagu in a car outside Winchester Crown Court where they were tried in 1953 for conspiracy to commit 'serious offences with male persons'. Under police pressure Wildeblood's lover Edward McNally gave evidence against him, together with John Reynolds, who had stayed with Wildeblood, McNally and Pitt-Rivers in Montagu's beach hut. The three defendants were convicted and jailed: Wildeblood and Pitt-Rivers for 18 months and Montagu for 12 months. The case was criticised for being a police witch-hunt against gay men and it led to calls for a change in law.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Case

Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and
Prostitution
1957
X65413

Better known as 'The Wolfenden Report', after its committee chair John Wolfenden, this document was the first major step towards decriminalisation. As well as taking evidence from psychiatrists, doctors and policemen, it heard the testimony of three gay men: Peter Wildeblood, Patrick Trevor-Roper and Carl Winter, who were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The resulting report concluded that 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence'. This conclusion was, however, controversial and it was not until 1967 that sex between men was partially decriminalised.

UK Parliamentary Archives (reference: HL/PO/
JO/10/11/579/1527)

Peter Wildeblood 1923–1999

Against the Law

1955

London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson

X66388

Private collection

Jailed as the result of a police witch hunt for gay men, Peter Wildeblood became a leading campaigner for prison reform and for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. In **Against the Law** he told of his experiences in HM prison Wormward Scrubs. It was described by the New Statesman's critic as 'the noblest, and wittiest, and most appalling prison book of them all'.

Photographer Unknown

Photograph Album

X63294

Neil Bartlett and James Gardiner Collection

This anonymous photograph album is a private erotic project, put together by someone who was attracted to jodhpurs and guardsmen. While the early pages show the photographer's amateur snaps of military pageants and race-meetings, as the album progresses, the pages get increasingly explicit, until by the end of the book, it includes professional pornographic images alongside his personal shots.

Scene from the film 'Victim' (Directed by Basil Dearden)

1961

Photograph

X67098

This publicity shot shows the final scene of the film **Victim** in which the lawyer Harry Farr burns an incriminating photograph that has been used to blackmail a friend, driving him to suicide. Farr shares his friend's desires and has sacrificed his reputation to bring the blackmailers to justice. Dirk Bogarde took the part of Farr – a particularly courageous decision as he was living with his manager, actor Anthony Forwood. He later described playing Farr as 'the wisest decision I ever made in my cinematic life'.

Private collection

Picture Post

27 March 1954

X66451

This article from **Picture Post** tells the story of Roberta Cowell, the first person in Britain to have gender reassignment surgery. To have her gender changed on her birth certificate she had to obtain a certificate from a surgeon stating she was intersex. Legal recognition that she was female made it impossible for her to continue her career as a Grand Prix driver. She sold her story to Picture Post and published an autobiography. Cowell sacrificed much and cut herself off from her children. Yet while her life was complicated, it was undoubtedly courageous and gave hope to many.

Middle of the room

Case

Barbara Ker-Seymer

Barbara Ker-Seymer was a photographer active in the interwar years. After studying at the Chelsea School of Art, she worked for the society portrait photographer Olivia Wyndham. When Wyndham moved to New York to be with her lover, the African-American actress Edna Lloyd-Thomas, Ker-Seymer was left in charge of her studio. She established her own studio on New Bond Street in 1931, and began a successful career as a fashion photographer for **Harper's Bazaar**. She pursued relationships with both men and women, and was associated with the queer subculture known as the Bright Young Things. After the Second World War, she ceased to work as a photographer, opening a laundrette in 1951. Her papers, in Tate Archive, are full of playful images of her friends.

Photographer unknown

Barbara Ker-Seymer in her studio

Photograph

Z07284

Tate Archive

Barbara Ker-Seymer 1905–1993

Photograph album pages

Z07287–89

Tate Archive

These pages come from one of Ker-Seymer's unbound private photograph albums. In one sheet, the artist Edward Burra poses coquettishly with his shirt undone, revealing his chest and tattooed shoulder. Ker-Seymer has labelled the image 'Lady Bureaux', a female alter-ego Burra would often assume in his riotously camp letters. Ker-Seymer is shown together with her art school friend, Clover de Pertinez, while a third page depicts a group of friends, posing on a visit to her studio.

Barbara Ker-Seymer 1905–1993

William Chappell as Creole Boy in Rio Grande

Photograph

Z07285

Tate Archive

Billy Chappell is photographed in his costume for **Rio Grande**, a ballet choreographed by Frederick Ashton in 1931. Edward Burra's designs (displayed nearby) updated the traditional sailor suit with a figure-fitting bodice edged with silver sequins. Ashton and Burra were two of Ker-Seymer's closest friends.

Letter from Barbara Ker-Seymer to Edward Burra

18 September 1928

Z07283

Tate Archive

In this letter, Ker-Seymer tells Edward Burra in September 1928, how she has been 'ordered out of the house' by her mother 'since **The Well of Loneliness** was found accidentally left lying on the piano'. The trial of Radclyffe Hall's novel for obscenity gave it a reputation for frank depictions of female same-sex desire.

Barbara Ker-Seymer 1905–1993

Drawing of a woman

Z07286

Tate Archive

This illustration from Ker-Seymer's papers depicts a woman dressed in typical New Woman style, an androgynous look Ker-Seymer would have depicted in her work as a fashion photographer.

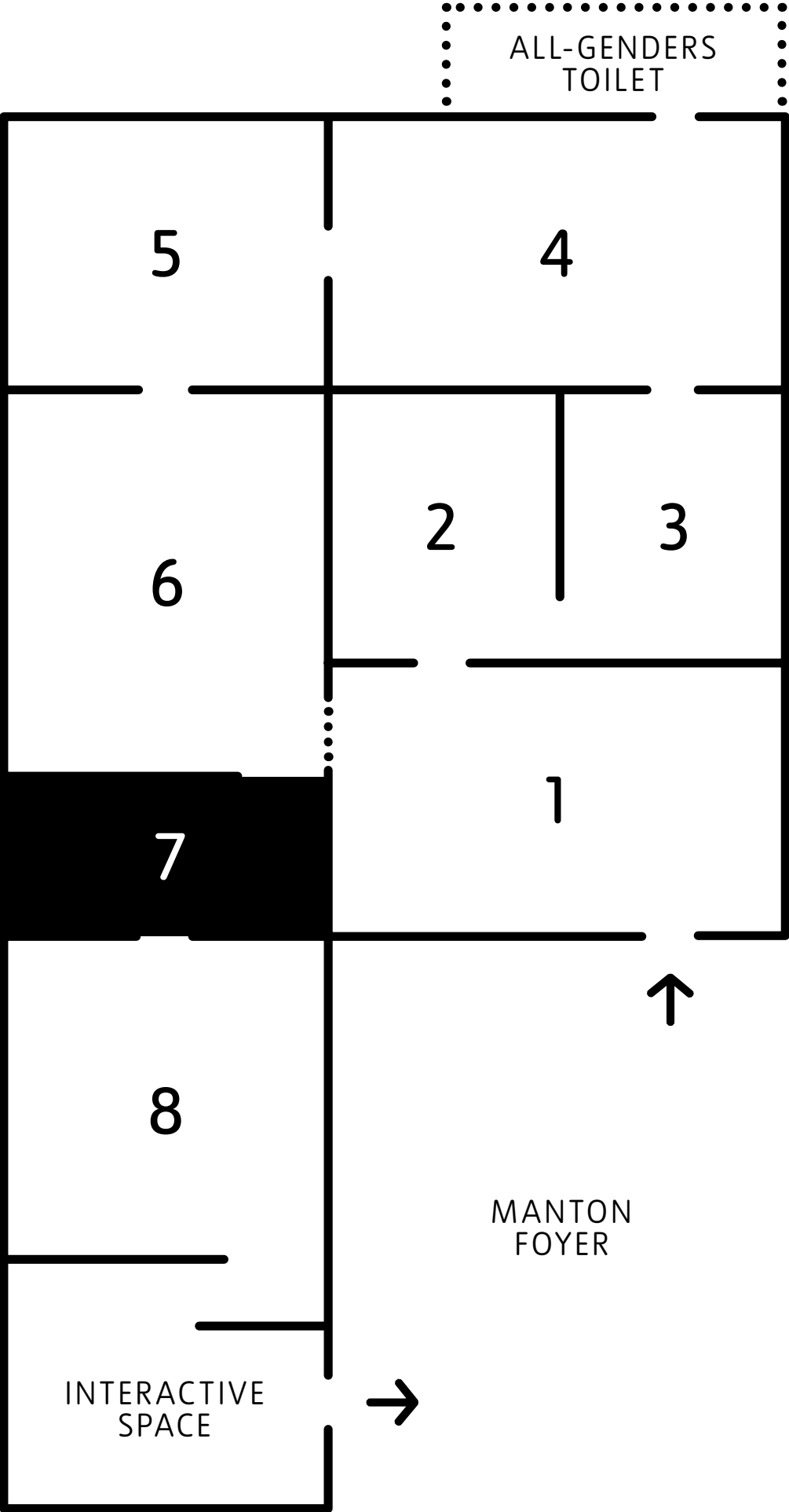
Barbara Ker-Seymer 1905–1993

Photograph Album

Z07282

Tate Archive

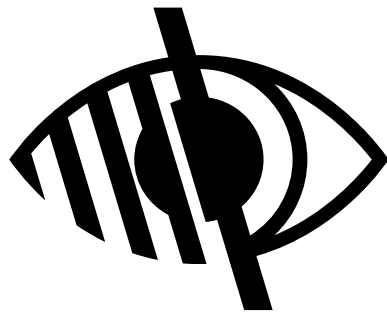
This creatively arranged spread in one of Ker-Seymer's photograph albums shows images of a number of her friends, including Marty Mann, an American who was for a time Ker-Seymer's business partner and lover. Mann's drinking was increasingly a problem and their relationship floundered. She later became an important advocate for the newly formed 'Alcoholics Anonymous'.



QUEER BRITISH ART 1861–1967

5 April – 1 October 2017

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



ROOM 8
FRANCIS BACON AND
DAVID HOCKNEY

Please return to holder

The most fearless depictions of male same-sex desire in the years before 1967 are in the work of Francis Bacon and David Hockney. Bacon told how as a teenager his parents threw him out of their home for trying on his mother's underwear. He gravitated to London, where he began his visceral exploration of the human figure. Hockney arrived in London in 1959 to study at the Royal College of Art. He was deeply impressed by Bacon's 1960 exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery, commenting 'you can smell the balls', but his own style was more playful, experimenting with abstraction and graffiti.

Hockney and Bacon both drew heavily on the visual culture that surrounded them, from well-established artistic sources such as Eadweard Muybridge's innovative photographs of wrestlers to cheap bodybuilding magazines. They were not alone in spotting the homoerotic potential of this material – artists such as Christopher Wood had already used the trope of wrestlers to hint at queer intimacy. Yet Hockney and Bacon went further, fearlessly stripping away ambiguities. Their work was controversial. Bacon's 1955 exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts was investigated by the police for obscenity while Hockney once described his early paintings as 'homosexual propaganda'. They both continued to push the boundaries of what could be depicted in art, breaking new ground.

Work labels

Clockwise from wall text

David Hockney born 1937

Going to be a Queen for Tonight

1960

Oil paint on canvas

X63295

The words 'queer' and 'queen', both terms for gay men at this time, are scrawled across the surface of this image. Hockney was fascinated with the graffiti in the public toilets at Earls Court Underground station. Here, messages about opportunities for casual sex were mixed with other slogans. The title playfully hints at these possibilities – 'queen' but only for the night. It was one of a number of paintings made by Hockney at the Royal College Of Art which reference queer urban life. Hockney described his early works as 'a kind of mixture of Alan Davie cum Jackson Pollock cum Roger Hilton'.

Royal College of Art

David Hockney born 1937

Bertha alias Bernie

1961

Oil paint on canvas

X63296

Bertha Alias Bernie was inspired by a magazine story and can be interpreted as depicting a drag queen, a cross-dresser or a trans woman. The sparse details leave much to the viewer's imagination. Are the figures meeting in a club or lying on a bed? Are we witnessing a sexual act or is the shadowy figure the masculine alias of Bernie, which Bertha has set aside? The spindly figurative style references the French artist Jean Dubuffet. Hockney recalled, 'I got taken with the deliberately childish thing and felt that I could use it with a lot of subjects and ideas'.

Francis Bacon 1909–1992

Seated Figure

1961

Oil paint on canvas

T00459

This image probably depicts Francis Bacon's former lover Peter Lacy. Bacon was a masochist and Lacy once told him 'you could live in a corner of my cottage on straw. You could sleep and shit there.' Lacy's suit and the inclusion of domestic details such as the exotic rug and chair contrast with the tempestuous abstract backdrop, giving the image an air of suppressed violence. Bacon spoke of his treatment of sitters in his portraits as an 'injury' and once said 'I hate a homely atmosphere. . . I want to isolate the image and take it away from the interior and the home.'

Tate. Presented by J. Sainsbury Ltd 1961

Francis Bacon 1909–1992

Two Figures in a Landscape

1956

Oil paint on canvas

X63135

Two Figures in a Landscape combines the homoerotic themes of the 'crouching nude' and 'figures in the grass' that Francis Bacon explored in multiple paintings throughout the 1950s. He was inspired by Eadweard Muybridge's photographs of wrestlers and athletes, along with Michelangelo's drawings and sculpture. Bacon adapted these to explore his homosexuality with varying degrees of ambiguity. He later explained 'Michelangelo and Muybridge are mixed up in my mind together' and 'I manipulate the Muybridge bodies into the form of the bodies I have known'.

Lent by Birmingham Museums Trust on
behalf of Birmingham City Council

David Hockney born 1937

Life Painting for a Diploma

1962

Oil paint, charcoal and collage on canvas

X63337

Life Painting for a Diploma formed part of David Hockney's final submission at the Royal College of Art. The hanging skeleton displays Hockney's skills as a draftsman but it is the well-toned bodybuilder who catches the viewer's attention. Hockney's gay American friend Mark Berger introduced him to 'beefcake' magazines such as **Physique Pictorial**. Here, the stereotypical model and inscription **PHYSIQUE** references this material. Hockney claimed he painted this image to satisfy the RCA's requirement that students produce a number of life-drawings. The work's title and its contrast between the arid skeleton and lively model (clearly not painted from life) subtly mocks his instructors.

David Hockney born 1937

Cleanliness is Next to Godliness

1964

Screenprint on paper

P04315

Tate. Presented by Rose and Chris Prater through
the Institute of Contemporary Prints 1975

Keith Vaughan 1912–1977

Wrestlers

1965

Watercolour and ink on paper

X63312

York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery). Gifted through the
Contemporary Art Society, as a bequest from Dr Ronald Lande,
in memory of his life partner Walter Urech, 2012

Christopher Wood 1901–1930

The Wrestlers

c.1920–30

Pencil on paper

X63980

Private collection

Nude wrestling was associated with ancient Greece and
Rome and there was a long tradition of wrestlers as an artistic
subject. There is, however, a striking tenderness to Christopher
Wood's **Wrestlers**, who seem to be more embracing than
struggling against one another.

Wilhelm von Gloeden 1856–1931

Wrestlers

c.1903, printed 1911

Photograph, print on salted paper

X64040

Wilson Centre for Photography

Eadweard Muybridge 1830–1904

Wrestlers Plate 347

Two Wrestlers

c.1887

2 photographs, collotype on paper

X64039

Wilson Centre for Photography

X63315

Wellcome Library, London

These plates come from Eadweard Muybridge's innovative series of photographs of the human figure in motion, which depicted men and women carrying out activities such as running, jumping or, in these examples, wrestling. There is little suggestion that Muybridge was aware of the homoerotic potential of his work but his wrestlers, in particular, became well known in queer circles. A correspondent to the American magazine **Physique Pictorial** remarked that he was amazed that these images had not been censored.

Centre of the room

Case

Physique Photography In Britain

British Physique photography flourished after the Second World War. Body-building magazines such as **Health and Strength** or **Man's World** could be purchased quite innocently in newsagents. For many gay men, however, these publications were an important first step towards finding a community.

Bodybuilding shots, wrestlers and 'art studies' offered a pretext for gay photographers such as Vince, Basil Clavery (alias 'Royale' and 'Hussar'), Lon of London and John Barrington to produce homoerotic imagery. Their work often included references to classical civilisation, an established shorthand for queer culture. Some dropped the pretence of bodybuilding altogether and sold more explicit material directly to a burgeoning private market.

This was a risky business: selling or sending such images through the post could land both photographer and purchaser in jail. Yet for many gay men, the easy availability of physique imagery gave reassurance that they were not alone. Somebody out there understood and shared their desires.

TIMELINE

1861

Offences Against the Person Act abolishes the death penalty for sodomy.

1885

'Gross indecency' (any sexual activity between males) becomes a crime under the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

1895

Oscar Wilde is sentenced to two years hard labour for gross indecency.

1921

Gross indecency is set to be extended to acts between women. The House of Lords rejects this on the grounds that most women are not aware of lesbianism.

1928

Radclyffe Hall's **The Well of Loneliness** is published. It is soon put on trial for obscenity. Ironically this raises public awareness of lesbianism that the prosecutors sought to repress.

1951

Roberta Cowell (1918–2011) becomes the first known British trans woman in the UK to have gender reassignment surgery and a change of birth certificate.

1957

The Wolfenden Report is published after a succession of high profile convictions for gross indecency. It recommends partial decriminalisation of sex between men for consenting adults in private.

1967

Sexual Offences Act is passed. This includes the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in private and sets the age of consent in England and Wales at 21.

FIND OUT MORE

To book event tickets call 020 7887 8888 or visit tate.org.uk

Members Private View

Tuesday 4 April, 10.00–17.15

Wednesday 12 April, 18.45–21.30

Tuesday 2 May, 18.45–21.30

For Members with the London Private View Pass

Tour: Audio Description

Monday 15 May

Manton Studio, 10.30–12.30

Free, no booking required

Tour: British Sign Language

Saturday 20 May

Manton Foyer, 11.00–12.00

Free, no booking required

LIVE EVENTS

The Black Flamingo Open Studio

3 May–11 June, 10.00 –18.00

Learning Gallery,

Free

Collaborate with artist Ben Connors and poet Dean Atta as they make new works exploring queer identity.

For residency and performance days see tate.org.uk

Late At Tate Britain: Queer British Art

Friday 2 June, 18.00–22.00

Free, no booking required

An evening exploring a mix of sound, visuals and making.

Curated by 15–25 year olds from Tate Collective London.

Festival: Queer British Art

Saturday 24 June, 14.00–22.00

Free. Some events require tickets

See tate.org.uk for further details

Performance: A Vision Of Love Revealed

In Sleep: Neil Bartlett

Friday 7 July

1840s Gallery

See tate.org.uk for further details

TALKS AND TOURS

Curator's Tour: Clare Barlow

Monday 8 May, 18.30–20.30

Linbury Galleries

£20 (£15 concessions)

Talk: Alan Cumming On Queer British Art

Sunday 14 May, 14.00–15.00

Clore Auditorium

£12 (£8 concessions) talk only

£22 (£8 concessions) talk and exhibition

Curator's Tour: Eleanor Jones

Friday 8 September, 18.30–20.30

Linbury Galleries

£20 (£15 concessions)

CONFERENCE

From Then To Now: Contemporary Artistic Perspectives On Making Queer Visible

Saturday 3 June

Clore Auditorium

See tate.org.uk for further details

Artists, activists and creative practitioners will discuss the ways in which artists and curators represent and articulate queer identities, communal spaces and the impact of regeneration, mainstreaming and the commodification of queer culture.

FURTHER READING

Emmanuel Cooper

**The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and
Art in the Last 100 Years in the West 1986**

Catherine Lord & Richard Meyer

Art & Queer Culture 2013

Alex Pilcher

A Queer Little History of Art 2017

Christopher Reed

Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas 2011

Nikki Sullivan

A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory 2003

Claude J Summers

The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts 2004

CATALOGUE

An exhibition catalogue is available from Tate shops or
at tate.org.uk/shop

Queer British Art 1861–1967

5 April–1 October 2017

Curated by Clare Barlow

Assisted by Amy Concannon

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and Andrew Stephenson

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Catalogue

The catalogue of this exhibition is available from Tate shops or at [tate.org.uk/shop](https://www.tate.org.uk/shop)

