VANESSA BELL & DUNCAN GRANT: INSIDE BLOOMSBURY

12 NOVEMBER – 11 APRIL 2027

LARGE PRINT GUIDE

Please return after use

CONTENTS

Concourse 4

Room 1 10

Room 2 27

Room 3 56

Room 4 101

Room 5 131

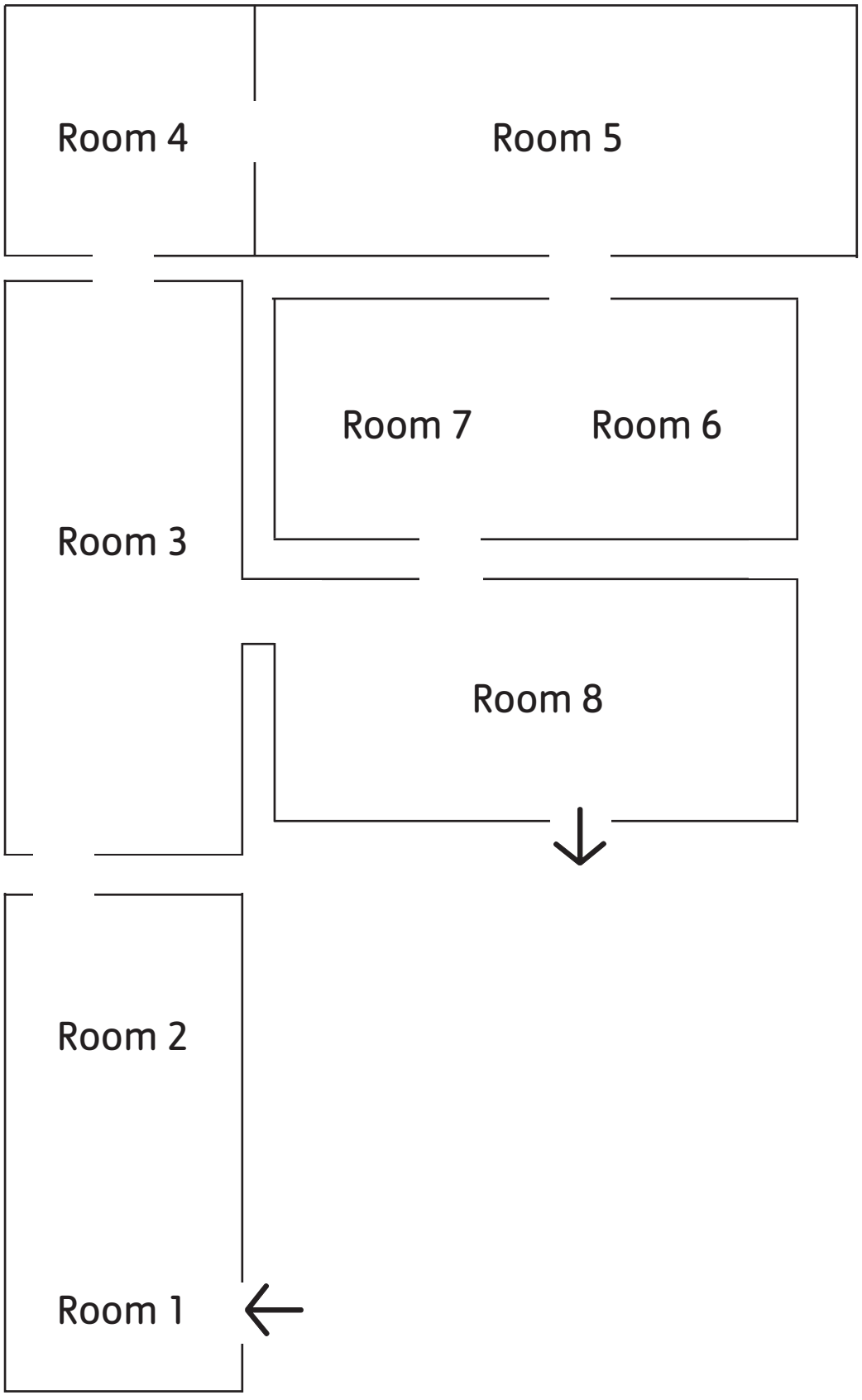
Room 6 163

Room 7 195

Room 8 203

All information is correct at the time of publication

EXHIBITION MAP



CONCOURSE

CONCOURSE

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961) and Duncan Grant (1885–1978) forged an extraordinary partnership in which art, family and friendships were intimately intertwined. They reshaped the course of modern art in Britain, creating vibrant paintings alongside decorative works and interiors that broke down the boundaries between art and everyday life.

As members of the Bloomsbury Group, Vanessa and Duncan rejected the strict moral codes of the Victorian era. Instead, the circle of artists, writers and intellectuals embraced experimental ways of living. Vanessa was married and Duncan was gay. Their unconventional relationship was sustained by enduring love and creative companionship.

Vanessa and Duncan were leading figures of the British avant-garde. Embracing European modernism, they experimented with vivid colours, expressive forms and bold lines. Working side by side, they created some of the earliest abstract art in Britain. Their practices expanded beyond painting to playful designs for furniture, textiles and ceramics. Travel brought new influences, enriching their later work.

Their ideas found their fullest expression at Charleston in East Sussex, where they transformed their home into a living work of art. This exhibition brings their creative world to life,

including a once-in-a-lifetime restaging of their studio.

AUDIO GUIDE

Hear stories from the exhibition curators and other experts in our self-led audio guide, available on your smartphone.
Scan to buy and start listening

VANESSA BELL & DUNCAN GRANT:
INSIDE BLOOMSBURY
12 NOV – 11 APR 2027

Vanessa Bell & Duncan Grant: Inside Bloomsbury is supported by

KIM JONES, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CHARLESTON TRUST

Further support from

FARROW&BALL

With additional support from the Vanessa Bell & Duncan Grant Exhibition Supporters Circle:

The Rothschild Foundation
Tavolozza Foundation
Britton Family Foundation
Georgia and David Winter
Mimi and Peter Haas Fund
Chalk Cliff Trust
Jake and Hélène Marie Shafran

Tate Patrons, Tate Members and Tate Americas Foundation

Also supported by Farrow & Ball for the supply of paint.

The exhibition is organised by Tate Britain
in collaboration with Charleston.

Curated by Thomas Kennedy, Curator, Modern British Art, Tate Britain, with Eliza Spindel, Assistant Curator, Modern British Art, Tate Britain.

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. Tate would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

Images: Duncan Grant, **Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting with Sound** 1914 (detail). Tate © estate of Duncan Grant.

All rights reserved, DACS 2026
Vanessa Bell, **Self-Portrait** c.1915 (detail). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund © estate of Vanessa Bell.
All rights reserved, DACS 2026
Duncan Grant, **Self-Portrait** c.1920 (detail). Private Collection © estate of Duncan Grant. All rights reserved, DACS 2026

VISITOR INFORMATION

– There are 8 rooms and 319 works in this exhibition plus 500+ works as part of the studio reconstruction.

– Lighting levels in the gallery vary.

– There is seating in some rooms and portable stools are available at the exhibition entrance.

– Ear defenders, earplugs, magnifying glasses, reading overlays, ramble tags and communication cards are on the shelf below, please return after use.

– Large print guides are available at the exhibition entrance and on the Tate website.

– Our Quiet Rooms can be found on the Main Floor, next to Play Studio.

– Toilets are located inside the exhibition.

– The Changing Places facility can be accessed through the Clore Gallery. Please ask a a member of Tate staff for directions.

1
PORTRAITS AND SELF PORTRAITS

CLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

Duncan Grant

Duncan Grant

c.1909
Oil paint on canvas

This is one of Duncan's earliest surviving self-portraits. Painted in a sombre palette of auburn, brown and black, it conveys a sense of quiet determination. In 1909, he moved to 21 Fitzroy Square in the Bloomsbury area of London. He began to spend time with Vanessa and her family and friends who lived nearby. Attending their informal gatherings, Duncan became part of the circle of writers, critics and artists who would later become known as the Bloomsbury Group.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London
X102518

Duncan Grant

Study for Composition: Self-Portrait with a Turban

1910
Oil paint on board

In this self-portrait, Duncan appears bare-chested and wears a turban. The implicitly queer and sensual self-image challenges conventional ideas of masculinity. Duncan's dramatic pose and direct gaze blur the boundaries between portraiture and performance. The turban heightens this theatrical quality while reflecting a wider fascination among European artists at the time with cultures beyond Europe. These were often viewed through an exoticising lens.

Private collection
X102642

[WALL TEXT]

1
PORTRAITS AND SELF-PORTRAITS

**Dear Duncan, May I call you so & will you call me Vanessa?
It seems rather absurd to begin with 'Dear Mr. Grant'
– Letter from Vanessa Bell to Duncan Grant, 1909**

The remarkable partnership between Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant spanned more than 50 years. In 1909, Vanessa invited Duncan to tea, proposing they address one another by their first names. At a time when informality was considered improper, this simple request challenged convention. It marked the beginning of a relationship that would define their lives and artistic practices.

Through portraits and self-portraits, the artists explored how they saw themselves, one another and their life together over time. Early works reflect the avant-garde ideas of the Bloomsbury Group. With radiant colours and bold forms, they experimented with the possibilities of painting.

Vanessa and Duncan's partnership grew from a shared passion for art and developed into a loving and domestic relationship. Although their bond was complex and

unconventional, their commitment to one another remained constant. In 1916, they moved to Charleston in East Sussex, where they created a home centred on art and experimental ways of living.

In later years, their work became more naturalistic. Portraits from the 1940s and 1950s show a mature use of colour while retaining the intimacy which had long characterised their works. This room traces both the evolution of their art and their lifelong creative dialogue.

Duncan Grant

Vanessa Bell in a Yellow Shawl

1911–12
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan paints Vanessa with loose, spotted brushstrokes similar to the pointillist paintings he encountered in France. He was also inspired by Byzantine mosaics he saw in the Kariye Mosque when visiting Istanbul in 1910. Rather than idealising Vanessa, Duncan presents her with a striking sense of immediacy that animates the composition. He depicts her wearing a shawl that recalls images of the Virgin Mary, punctuated with bright pops of yellow, orange and blue.

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110399

Vanessa Bell

Self-Portrait

c.1915
Oil paint on canvas laid on panel

Vanessa gazes outward against a background of blocks of colour that reflect her early experimental approach to painting. In her 1927 novel **To the Lighthouse**, Virginia Woolf partly based the character of Lily Briscoe on her sister Vanessa. Lily is described as a modern artist who struggles with self-doubt after hearing the claim that 'women can't paint, women can't write'. Vanessa also questioned her abilities at times, yet she defied these views, pursuing an ambitious artistic vision that pushed the boundaries of modern art.

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund
X102428

1

Vanessa Bell

Duncan Grant in front of a Mirror

c.1915–17
Oil paint on plywood

Vanessa painted this portrait while Duncan was recovering from a cold at Eleanor, a cottage in West Wittering, West Sussex. She moved there with Duncan and his lover David 'Bunny' Garnett following the outbreak of the First World War. Duncan later recalled realising that Vanessa was in love with him when he noticed her watching him shave in the mirror. Echoing this memory of private observation, this portrait offers a glimpse of the complex romantic feelings that developed between them during this period.

Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Bequest of William S. Lieberman, 2005 (2007.49.18)
X102440

Duncan Grant

Vanessa Bell Painting

1915
Oil paint on canvas

When Duncan, Vanessa and Bunny first moved to Eleanor in spring 1915, it was too cold to paint in the boatshed studio. They set up a shared space in the dining room instead. Here, Vanessa is shown from behind, absorbed in a still-life study. She balances her foot on a second chair which she uses as an easel. The group remained at Eleanor until the end of the summer. During their stay they entertained friends including Vanessa's husband Clive Bell, writer and critic Lytton Strachey and economist John Maynard Keynes.

National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased 1965
X102442

Duncan Grant

Portrait of Vanessa Bell

1915
Oil paint and collage on wood

This is the largest of a series of paintings depicting Vanessa in a red dress. Duncan enhances the surface with collage elements, adding texture to her skin and to the paisley pattern of her clothing. The portrait was painted at Eleanor, where their relationship evolved from friendship into a lasting artistic and romantic partnership. Although Duncan was gay, he fell in love with Vanessa, valuing their creative collaboration and the freedom to be himself in her company.

Allocated to Charleston by the estate of Anne Olivier Bell and the Arts Council England Acceptance in Lieu Scheme X110293

Duncan Grant

At Eleanor: Vanessa Bell

1915
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa described her experience of modelling for this portrait to their friend, the artist and art critic Roger Fry: 'I have been sitting [for] Duncan in a very easy position. I haven't done a stroke of work myself unless you count dress making'. During the First World War, Duncan and Bunny were conscientious objectors and worked on a farm near Eleanor as part of their war service. In 1916, they relocated to Suffolk and then Charleston in East Sussex, where Duncan and Vanessa lived and worked for the rest of their lives.

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund
X102433

Duncan Grant

Duncan Grant, 1885–1978.
Artist (Self-Portrait)

c.1920
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan painted his reflection in an oval mirror at 46 Gordon Square, Vanessa's London home. He often painted self-portraits because hiring professional models was expensive. In the background hangs **Seated Woman in an Armchair** 1917–18 by French artist Henri Matisse, which had recently been purchased by John Maynard Keynes. Vanessa and Duncan had met Matisse and other leading modernist painters, including Pablo Picasso and André Derain, while staying in Paris. Their work profoundly influenced Vanessa's and Duncan's practices.

National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased 1980
X102445

Duncan Grant

Self-Portrait

c.1920
Oil paint on board

This loosely painted self-portrait captures Duncan's direct and expressive technique. Fellow Bloomsbury Group artist and critic Roger Fry described Duncan as a 'pure and uncompromising' artist whose work was 'so spontaneous, so unconstrained, so entirely natural and unaffected'. On the reverse of the portrait is a scene of ships at sea that was once displayed above the fireplace in Charleston's garden room. They were painted on the backing of a mirror which had been broken.

Private collection
X103405

2

Duncan Grant

Vanessa Bell

1942
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan painted this portrait at Charleston during the Second World War. Vanessa sits in a high-backed armchair, wearing a regal cloak and steadily meeting the viewer's gaze. Painted after decades of living and working together, the portrait reflects Duncan's reverence for his partner. Vanessa's brother-in-law, Leonard Woolf, observed that she could sometimes appear 'frightening and formidable' to outsiders. However, others fondly remembered her caring nature towards friends and family. Her son Julian described her as 'my best, with such a calm of mind … Patient and sensitive, cynic and kind.'

Tate. Purchased 1943
N05405

Vanessa Bell

The Artist in her Studio

1952
Oil paint on canvas

In her later years, Vanessa preferred the quiet of the countryside. Yet their home remained a busy hub for visitors, prompting her to write to Roger Fry: 'The fact is that one hasn't had a moment to oneself during domestic life in the country.' In 1939, she moved her studio to the newly renovated attic, finding that the secluded room was the 'perfect place to work'. In this self-portrait, she sits at her easel. Brushes, canvases and bottles of oil paint surround her, reflecting her lifelong commitment to art.

Yale Center for British Art, Louise Wheatley Collection,
Gift of Alison, Kit, and Christopher Wheatley
X102431

Duncan Grant

Self-Portrait

1956
Oil paint on board

Vanessa Bell

Self-Portrait

c.1958
Oil paint on canvas

Private collection
X102489
The Charleston Trust. Acquired with the assistance
of The Art Fund and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund
X49181

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Wearing matching straw hats and glasses, Vanessa and Duncan's self-portraits from the late 1950s mirror one another. Both works focus on the careful observation of their likenesses, giving no indication of their surroundings. The artist André Dunoyer de Segonzac later interpreted Vanessa's portrait as a 'token farewell', a work 'pervaded by a moving sense of resignation'. Vanessa died in 1961, while Duncan outlived her by 17 years.

2
BEFORE BLOOMSBURY

ANTICLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

[WALL TEXT]

2
BEFORE BLOOMSBURY

Vanessa grew up in the Kensington area of London with her siblings Thoby, Adrian and Virginia Stephen. Although their home was intellectually vibrant, it was rooted in strict Victorian conventions. Virginia later recalled: 'The cruel thing was that while we could see the future, we were completely in the power of the past.' The siblings began to challenge these traditional values. Vanessa found freedom through art, studying painting with Sir Arthur Cope before attending the Royal Academy Schools in 1901.

Duncan was born in Rothiemurchus, Scotland, and spent part of his childhood in India, where his father served in the British army. Defying his family's expectations of a military career, he enrolled at Westminster School of Art. He later travelled to Paris to train under Jacques-Émile Blanche at Académie de la Palette. There, he encountered new artistic influences.

In 1904, after the death of their father, Vanessa and her siblings moved to 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury.

Their Thursday ‘at homes’ brought together artists, writers and intellectuals who later became known as the Bloomsbury Group. Vanessa also founded the Friday Club, a society for artists to meet, share ideas and exhibit their works.

Duncan Grant

Village Street

c.1903
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan’s artistic talent was recognised during his teenage years at St Paul’s School in London. In 1902, he enrolled at the Westminster School of Art, a move that strengthened his resolve to make art. Later that year, Duncan stayed at Elm Lodge in Streatley, near Reading, with his parents Bartle and Ethel Grant. He painted this quiet street scene, lined with thatched cottages. Against a soft colour palette, flashes of red draw the viewer’s eye.

The Charleston Trust
X110294

Duncan Grant

The Kitchen

1902
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan paints a cook caught unawares in the kitchen at Elm Lodge. This marks the beginning of his enduring interest in depicting people in domestic interiors. The view from one room into another also became a recurring feature of his paintings. The colours are controlled yet rich, revealing Duncan's sensitivity to tone and atmosphere in his early career. His careful arrangement of objects in the foreground signals his interest in still life compositions by French artists.

Tate. Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1959
T00294

Simon Bussy

Lady Strachey

c.1905
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan's aunt, Lady Jane Strachey, was an early supporter of his artistic career. While studying at the Westminster School of Art, he stayed with her and was close with his cousins, including Lytton, James and Marjorie. Another cousin, Dorothy, married French painter Simon Bussy. With Simon's encouragement, Duncan decided to travel to Paris and continue his education. He hoped to 'learn all that there is to know and be seen in the world of painting', he later said.

Tate. Presented by Miss Philipa Strachey and Miss Joan Pernel Strachey 1946
N05662

Duncan Grant

Lemon Gatherers

1910
Oil paint on millboard

Duncan painted **Lemon Gatherers** at Fitzroy Square, where he was living at the time with John Maynard Keynes. It was inspired by Sicilian performers he had seen at the Shaftesbury Theatre two years earlier. Vanessa bought the painting when it was exhibited at the Friday Club. Writing to her husband Clive Bell, she described it as 'really very good indeed, very well drawn and a beautiful composition'. She concluded that Duncan was 'the most interesting of the younger painters'.

Tate. Purchased 1922
N03666

Duncan Grant

The Duke of Urbino

c.1904
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan copied this from a double portrait of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino by the Italian Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca. He probably saw the work at the Uffizi Galleries while visiting Florence with his mother in 1904. Duncan was drawn to the artist's use of light and colour and applied these qualities to his own paintings. Throughout their careers, both Duncan and Vanessa returned to the work of early modern European painters for inspiration.

The Charleston Trust. Acquired with the assistance of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund
X110295

Duncan Grant

After Chardin

c.1906
Oil paint on canvas

In 1906, Duncan travelled to Paris to study at Jacques-Émile Blanche's private art school La Palette. In his memoir, displayed nearby, Duncan remembers copying a painting by Jean-Siméon Chardin in the Louvre but being 'too shy' to show it to Blanche. This is likely the copy he refers to. It closely follows the original 18th-century painting, with subtle variations that reflect Duncan's own style.

Collection of Sir Neil Calver
X103641

3

Duncan Grant

James Strachey

1910
Oil paint on canvas

The poet Rupert Brooke jokingly referred to this portrait as the ‘famous picture of James’s legs’. Duncan painted his cousin reading in a chair in front of a decorative folding screen. In 1906, James declared his love for Duncan, and the pair later embarked on a short-lived romance. James later became a psychoanalyst. With his wife Alix, they produced the first English translation of Sigmund Freud, which shaped British psychoanalysis.

Tate. Purchased 1947
N05765

Duncan Grant

John Maynard Keynes

1908
Oil paint on canvas

Maynard was one of Duncan's most significant relationships. They became romantically involved in 1908 and travelled to Hoy in the Orkney Islands for what was dubbed a 'honeymoon' by Lytton Strachey. Arriving before Maynard, Duncan wrote: 'Dearest, at this moment I would give my soul to the Devil if I could kiss you and be kissed.' He painted this portrait while Maynard worked on his Cambridge dissertation, **A Treatise on Probability**. Although their romantic relationship ended after a year, they remained close friends throughout their lives.

The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge
X102447

Duncan Grant

Adrian Stephen

c.1910
Oil paint on canvas

Adrian Stephen was Vanessa's youngest brother. Duncan captures his youthful appearance and strong resemblance to his siblings in this portrait. Between 1909 and 1912, the two were romantically involved. Duncan wrote: 'I am always extraordinarily happy when I'm in that house [on Fitzroy Square], and he's there'. Although Duncan had encounters with other men during this period, he was upset when Adrian began to spend more time with Karin Costello, whom he later married.

The Charleston Trust
X110296

[FRAME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

Duncan Grant

Lytton Strachey
Verso: Crime and Punishment

c.1909
Oil paint on canvas

This double-sided painting shows Duncan's cousins, Lytton and Marjorie Strachey. Painted at the family home in Belsize Park Gardens, the portraits reflect their shared literary interests. Depicted studying an oversized book, Lytton was a writer who found fame with his satirical biography **Eminent Victorians**. He had a short-term romance with Duncan. On the reverse, Marjorie rests her head in her hands, placing aside a copy of Dostoevsky's novel Crime and Punishment. The painting was shown at the Friday Club in 1910.

Tate. Purchased 1947
N05764

Vanessa Bell

Saxon Sydney-Turner at the Piano

c.1908
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa's brother Thoby befriended Leonard Woolf, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey and Saxon Sydney-Turner while studying at Trinity College, Cambridge. Thoby later invited his friends to 'at-homes' at Gordon Square on Thursday evenings. Known for his quiet personality, Saxon could sometimes spend hours without speaking. Here, Vanessa paints him entertaining the group at a piano. Duncan remembered that Gordon Square and its gatherings was where the Bloomsbury Group 'came into being.'

The Charleston Trust
X110302

Vanessa Bell

Apples: 46 Gordon Square

c.1908–9
Oil paint on canvas

Following their father's death in 1904, Vanessa and her siblings moved to 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury. This still life of apples on a serving dish is set against a view of the square from their window. Virginia found their new home 'the most beautiful, the most exciting, the most romantic place in the world'. Looking out at the trees she recalled that 'the light and the air after the rich red gloom of Hyde Park Gate were a revelation.' There, they began to embrace more modern ways of living. mirrors the central image: a head formed from two half-portraits of Kahlo and Rivera. Intertwined roots as well as the sun and moon further emphasise the couple's union as two parts of a whole.

Private collection, on loan to The Charleston Trust
X110303

5

Vanessa Bell

Iceland Poppies

c.1908–9
Oil paint on canvas

Many of Vanessa's early works were destroyed by aerial bombing during the Second World War. **Iceland Poppies** is one of the few that survives. The painting depicts an arrangement of medicinal objects, including an 18th-century pharmacist's jar, a corked bottle and poppies, from which some narcotics are derived. Vanessa first exhibited the painting at the New English Art Club in 1908. The artist Walter Sickert sat on the selection jury and wrote to her to say: 'I didn't know you were a painter. Continuez!'.

The Charleston Trust. Acquired with the assistance of the National Lottery Fund and the Art Fund
X110301

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

On 4 February 1908, Vanessa and Clive welcomed their first child, Julian. She depicts him in a halo of white cloth, conveying tenderness and affection. Before giving birth, Vanessa admitted to Virginia that she was ‘honestly terrified sometimes of the responsibility of having children’. However, she later wrote: ‘We are both flourishing, and Julian came into the world shouting healthily’. Vanessa also produced several detailed drawings of Julian in a sketchbook, displayed nearby. His brother Quentin was born two years later.

Vanessa Bell

Julian Asleep

c.1908
Oil paint on canvas

Julian Bell

c.1908
Oil paint on board

The Charleston Trust
X110300, X110299

Vanessa Bell

Clive Bell

c.1909
Oil paint on board

Vanessa met art critic Clive Bell through her brother Thoby. Clive proposed in 1905, but she turned him down. He persisted, and it was only after Thoby's sudden death from typhus in 1906 that Vanessa accepted. Over time their relationship evolved beyond the conventions of a traditional marriage. They never divorced and maintained an open relationship that prioritised honesty and personal fulfilment. They remained an important part of one another's lives. The arrangement enabled Vanessa to focus on her artistic career and pursue other relationships.

The Charleston Trust
X110298

4

Vanessa Bell

Portrait of Sir Leslie Stephen

1902–3
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa's father Leslie Stephen was a writer, scholar and founder of the **Dictionary of National Biography**. Their home at 22 Hyde Park Gate was filled with books, conversation and distinguished visitors including politicians, poets and artists. Yet it was also shaped by strict Victorian gender roles, where women were expected to be subordinate to men and devoted to the family. After his wife Julia died, Leslie struggled with grief and Vanessa took on many household duties while studying at the Royal Academy Schools.

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110400

Julia Margaret Cameron

Julia Prinsep Stephen
(née Jackson, formerly Mrs Duckworth)

1867
Albumen print, oval

This photograph of Vanessa's mother Julia was taken by her aunt, the pioneering photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. Her mother had also modelled for artists Edward Burne-Jones and George Frederic Watts. In 1895, she suddenly died from complications following influenza. Her death deeply affected Vanessa and her siblings. In the years that followed, they began to question their upbringing, seeking greater social and creative freedoms.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London.
Given by Cordelia Curle (née Fisher), 1959
X102519

Vanessa Bell

Cornish Cottage

c.1900
Oil paint on board

As a child, Vanessa spent three or four months each year in Cornwall with her family. They rented Talland House in St Ives and brought their London life with them, including 'mounds of luggage', easels and even furniture. This view of Cornish cottages against the peaceful coastal scenery is one of Vanessa's earliest surviving paintings. Her sister Virginia Woolf later drew on memories of their summers together when writing her novel **To the Lighthouse.**

The Charleston Trust
X110297

[VITRINE 1 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Holding a letter of recommendation from artist Simon Bussy, Duncan travelled to study in Paris in 1906. This showcase includes a hotel bill from his stay and his student identity card. He thought his tutor Jacques-Émile Blanche was a ‘stimulating and exciting professor’, but ‘not a great painter’.

Duncan later stayed in Hoy in the Orkney Islands with his lover John Maynard Keynes. Duncan painted watercolours of the surrounding landscape while waiting for him to arrive.

Clockwise from top left

Duncan Grant

Hoy

c.1908
Watercolour on paper

Carte d'Atelier for 'La Palette'

1906–7
Ink on paper

Hotel bill from 'Hotel de L'Univers' & 'Du Portugal', Paris

1907
Ink on paper

The Charleston Trust, X110366
Tate Archive TGA 20078/7/6, Z92360
Tate Archive TGA 8010/9/3, Z92359

Alvin Langdon Coburn

Photograph of Duncan Grant

c.1910
Facsimile photograph

Photograph of Duncan Grant

c.1910
Facsimile photograph

Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum
© The Universal Order
Z92363–4

Duncan Grant

Duncan Grant's memoir of his time in Paris

n.d.
Ink on paper

Drawing from La Palette

1907–8
Ink on paper

Tate Archive TGA 8010/9/3, Z92361–2
Private collection, X103701

[VITRINE 2 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Vanessa and her sister Virginia had a private agreement that neither would intrude on the other's creative path: if one became an artist, the other would be a writer. The photograph of the Stephen siblings shows Vanessa at an easel, while Virginia sits beside her with a book. Other archival materials relate to Vanessa's training at the Royal Academy Schools under John Singer Sargent and to the Friday Club, the exhibiting society Vanessa founded in 1905. Together, they trace her artistic development and early career.

Clockwise from top left

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa, Virginia, Julian and Adrian Stephen

n.d.
Facsimile photograph

Photograph of Leslie and Julia Stephen, George and Gerald Duckworth, Vanessa, Virginia, Julian and Adrian Stephen

n.d.
Facsimile photograph

Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English
and American Literature, The New York Public Library
Z92365–6

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Margery Snowden

n.d.
Ink on paper

Sketchbook drawings of the artist's son Julian

1908
Chalk on paper

Tate Archive TGA 8010/11/1, Z92367
The Charleston Trust, X110367

George Charles Beresford

Vanessa Bell

1902
Facsimile photograph

Paul Nash

The Friday Club Poster

1921
Facsimile

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Duncan Grant

24 June 1910
Ink on paper, and facsimile

Private Collection/Bridgeman Images, Z92368
Private collection, Z92371
Tate Archive TGA 20078/1/44/3, Z92369, Z92370

3
NEW MODERNISMS

CLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

[WALL TEXT]

3
NEW MODERNISMS

In the 1910s, Vanessa and Duncan began a period of intense artistic experimentation. Their friend, the artist and critic Roger Fry, organised a landmark exhibition, **Manet and the Post-Impressionists**, held in London in 1910. It introduced British audiences to the innovative work of European artists. Although visitors and conservative critics reacted in horror, the exhibition energised a generation of artists in Britain. For Vanessa, it signalled 'a possible path, a sudden liberation and encouragement to feel for oneself'.

Inspired by post-impressionist ideas, Vanessa and Duncan began to paint with heightened colours, simplified forms and strong lines in increasingly ambitious ways. Vanessa found inspiration in the people, places and objects around her, while Duncan often drew upon a range of imagery from global art history.

The artists applied their modernist style to portraits of the Bloomsbury Group and their wider circle of friends. This room also brings together works made during shared visits to Studland Beach, Asheham House and Brandon Camp where they explored new ways of painting.

Vanessa and Duncan embraced the group's ideas of creative freedom, collaboration and innovation. Their artistic experiments led them to create some of the first abstract artworks in Britain. Rather than depicting what they saw, they invited a direct, emotional response to shapes and colours.

Duncan Grant

Dancers

c.1910–11
Oil paint on wood

Dancers

1912
Oil paint on canvas

Tate. Bequeathed by Sir Edward Marsh through the Contemporary Art Society 1953
N06181
Private collection, courtesy of Philip Mould & Company
X103249

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

These paintings of dancing figures reflect Duncan's interest in both Italian Renaissance art and the modern artists featured in the **Manet and the Post-Impressionists** exhibition, held at Grafton Galleries in 1910. He made two versions of the same scene within a year. In the second he simplified the figures, adopting bolder outlines, angular forms and unblended brushwork. His expressive changes reveal his growing engagement with French post-impressionism.

6

Duncan Grant

Katherine Cox in Rupert Brooke's Garden, The Old Vicarage, Grantchester

1911
Oil paint on panel

Private collection
X102490

Duncan Grant

Head of Eve

1913
Oil paint on board

Duncan often combined influences from different periods and cultures. Here, Eve from the Christian Bible appears with a mask-like face, large eyes and a rigid, symmetrical pose that recalls Byzantine imagery. Simplified shapes, intense colour and hatched shadows give the painting a striking immediacy. The work also reflects Duncan's interest in Pablo Picasso, who he met several times throughout his career. **Head of Eve** was a study for the larger composition **Adam and Eve**, which was destroyed in aerial bombing during the Second World War.

Tate. Purchased 1984
T03847

Duncan Grant

Standing Nude with Bird

1914
Oil paint on panel

The Bloomsbury Group was named by Molly MacCarthy, who called her friends living in the area the ‘Bloomsberries’. Molly was a central figure in the group, helping to maintain their social cohesiveness as it grew beyond the original members. Her importance within the circle is reflected in Duncan’s bold portrait. He places Molly against a backdrop of vivid blue, ochre and green shapes, while a white bird sits serenely at her feet. He based this painting on a nude photograph taken in the studio at Gordon Square.

Private collection
X102486

Vanessa Bell

The Tub

1917
Oil paint and gouache on canvas

In September 1917, Vanessa described this large, life-sized painting to Roger Fry: 'There's very little in the picture and it's mostly one colour or two, yellow ochre and a greenish grey. The subject is principally floor with a bath and a semi-nude female'. Vanessa was inspired by the subject of bathers in French painting, including works by Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas and Henri Matisse. The figure was partially clothed before Vanessa reworked the painting. She initially intended it to decorate the garden room at Charleston, although the plan was not realised.

Tate. Purchased 1975
T02010

Duncan Grant

David Garnett

1915
Oil paint on canvas

At a time when homosexuality was illegal in Britain, Duncan's relationships with men were accepted within the Bloomsbury Group. However, they sometimes created tensions in his relationship with Vanessa. Duncan met the writer and publisher David 'Bunny' Garnett in 1914. During the First World War, he modelled for the artists. Duncan presents Bunny as masculine and amorous while Vanessa made a contrasting portrait (National Portrait Gallery) that emphasised his youth.

Viscountess Marcia Persephone Blakenham
X102464

Duncan Grant

Omega Paper Flowers on the Mantelpiece, 46 Gordon Square

1914
Oil paint on canvas

Throughout the early 1910s, Vanessa and Duncan explored the limits of post-impressionism. They infused their still life arrangements with rich colours, painting them as abstracted shapes that are almost unrecognisable. The collection of items in this work was assembled on the mantelpiece at 46 Gordon Square. Duncan includes a terracotta vase holding distinctive paper flowers made at the Omega Workshops.

Private collection, courtesy of Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert
X102641

Vanessa Bell

Still Life on Corner of a Mantelpiece

1914
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan Grant

The Mantelpiece

1914
Oil paint and paper on board

Tate. Purchased 1969
T01133
Tate. Purchased 1971
T01328

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

These paintings of the mantelpiece at Gordon Square were made during a period when Vanessa and Duncan were spending more time together. Vanessa wrote that they ‘talk of hardly anything but painting’. Working side by side, she sat to the left while Duncan stood to the right, resulting in slightly different viewpoints of the same subject. Their choice of materials and techniques also differed. Vanessa worked solely in oil paint while Duncan incorporated painted collage elements.

8

Duncan Grant

Composition with Grey Leaves and a Sliced Circle

1914–16
Oil paint on canvas

Private collection
X102643

Vanessa Bell

Composition

c.1914
Gouache, watercolour and coloured paper on
cut-and-pasted paper

'I have been practicing the art of paper mosaic,' Vanessa wrote to Duncan. 'The result is divine. Extraordinary brilliance & great beauty of line & colour.' This abstract composition is created from cut and pasted papers, pre-painted by the artist. Vanessa composes a scene of an abstracted house in a landscape, beside two trees and a pond, reduced to its most essential elements.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection, 1978.
X102516

Duncan Grant

Interior at Gordon Square

c.1915
Oil paint on wood

Tate. Purchased 1969
T01143

Vanessa Bell

Abstract Painting

c.1914
Oil paint on canvas

This was one of Vanessa's first fully geometric paintings. Six blocks of colour float against a vibrant yellow background. She described it as a 'test for chrome yellow', exploring how contrasting colours interact with one another. Her sister Virginia described Vanessa as a 'poet in colour', recognising her sensitivity to colour as a means of expression.

Tate. Purchased 1974
T01935

Vanessa Bell

Abstract Composition

1914
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa and Duncan's abstract works explored the notion that an artwork could create an emotional response purely through colour, shape and line, rather than depicting recognisable subjects. Clive Bell and Roger Fry described this idea as 'significant form'. While Vanessa embraced abstraction as a new artistic language during this period, she also extended these ideas to the decorative arts at the Omega Workshops.

Ivor Braka Limited
X102485

Duncan Grant

Abstract

1915
Oil paint on fabric and collaged paper on panel

Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin
X102461

Vanessa Bell

Abstract Composition

c.1914
Oil paint, gouache and collage on paper

Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin
X102460

Duncan Grant

Abstract

1914–15
Oil paint, fabric and collaged paper on board

Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin
X102462

Duncan Grant

In Memoriam: Rupert Brooke

1915
Oil paint and collage on panel

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund
X102434

Vanessa Bell

Roger Fry

1912
Oil paint on panel

Vanessa painted this portrait of Roger Fry using small touches of colour. She wrote to Clive: 'I did a sketch of Roger yesterday in Duncan's leopard manner with odd results.' Roger was an artist, critic and curator who played a pivotal role in shaping Vanessa's and Duncan's practices. During a trip to Turkey in 1911, Vanessa had a miscarriage and Roger cared for her during her recovery. They began a relationship soon afterwards. Although Vanessa fell in love with Duncan around 1915, Roger remained an important figure in her life.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London. Purchased with help from Sir Christopher Ondaatje and the Art Fund, 2005
X68238

Duncan Grant

George Mallory

1913
Oil paint on canvas

The pointillist works of French painters Georges Seurat and Paul Signac inspired Duncan in the early 1910s. He experimented with small brushstrokes of contrasting colour, building images with touches of paint. At the time, Duncan was enamoured by George Mallory, an accomplished mountaineer. 'I cannot help wanting to express my feelings,' Duncan wrote to George, 'I was somehow conscious that a kiss would somehow do it … I think you beautiful for one.' George posed nude for Duncan in photographs and paintings in 1913.

Ömer Koç Collection
X103560

[WALL TEXT]

THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP

The Bloomsbury Group was not a formal artistic movement but a group of friends and relatives who 'between 1904 and 1914 saw a great deal of each other', wrote Clive Bell. Many of these artists, writers and thinkers lived in the Bloomsbury area of London. Although the name was adopted by the papers and the public, some members questioned whether they belonged to a 'Group'.

The members are said to have been Clive and Vanessa Bell, EM Forster, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, John Maynard Keynes, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, Adrian and Karin Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Saxon Sydney-Turner, and Leonard and Virginia Woolf.

The group was formed through Thursday evening gatherings at 46 Gordon Square, the home of Vanessa and her siblings. The friends shared a commitment to intellectual debates about art, literature and social freedom, rejecting the strict morality of the Victorian generation. This included supporting women's rights, pacifist beliefs and non-monogamous and queer relationships.

The visual art of the Bloomsbury Group was often criticised at the time as being merely decorative and 'feminine'. Some critics also objected to their progressive ideas and non-traditional lifestyles, often in ways rooted in sexism or homophobia. Yet the group had a significant impact on art and society in 20th-century Britain.

Vanessa Bell

Virginia Woolf

1912
Oil paint on board

In 1912, Virginia Woolf completed a draft of her first novel **Melymbrosia** during a period of mental illness. The book was later revised and published as **The Voyage Out** in 1915. Asheham provided a place for Virginia to recover with friends and family. Vanessa paints her sister sitting pensively in the living room during their first stay there in winter of 1912. They returned to Asheham regularly over the following years.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London.
Purchased with help from the Art Fund, 1987
X102520

Vanessa Bell

Conversation Piece

1912
Oil paint on board

In the living room at Asheham, Leonard Woolf reclines in an armchair while Adrian Stephen leans towards him, as if making an important point. Clive Bell's legs are visible in the bottom-right corner, suggesting that he too is part of the discussion. Conversation was central to the beliefs of the Bloomsbury Group. Its members valued open and frank exchanges of ideas, challenging conventional attitudes towards art, sex, relationships and society. Their conversations played an important role in their intellectual and creative lives.

University of Hull Art Collection
X103634

Vanessa Bell

Frederick and Jessie Etchells Painting

1912
Oil paint on board

Vanessa depicts artists Frederick and Jessie Etchells at Asheham. She reduces their individual features, focusing on the scene's colour and arrangement. Positioned at easels, the siblings are set against the garden made of blocks of orange, ochre and green.

Tate. Purchased 1971
T01277

Duncan Grant

Group at Asheham: Adrian Stephen, Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Henri Doucet

1913
Oil paint on board

Asheham House in East Sussex was a gathering place for artists and friends. Duncan depicts friends relaxing in the garden, including French artist Henri Doucet, who sits on the right. Executed in rhythmic dashes of paint, the figures emerge from a composition of abstracted shapes with only a few identifying details.

Private collection
X102695

Top to bottom

Duncan Grant

The Artist's Camp

1913
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa Bell

Summer Camp

1913
Oil paint on board

Private collection
X102488, X102487

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

These works were painted during a group holiday to Brandon Camp in Norfolk in 1913. They show that although Vanessa and Duncan were depicting similar subjects, they retained distinct artistic styles. Friends and family at Brandon Camp included members of the Bloomsbury Group accompanied by Brynhild, Margery, Noël and Daphne Olivier. The sisters were known as the 'Neo-Pagans' for their love of the outdoors. The holiday is recorded in photographs, displayed nearby.

Vanessa Bell

Girl by a Tent

1913
Oil paint on board

Painted in a simplified, graphic style, this work likely depicts one of the Olivier sisters beside a tent at Brandon Camp. Vanessa enjoyed the holiday and wrote to Clive about her time there. Describing one warm summer day, she noted: 'Adrian spent the afternoon romping with Noël and Daphne, so I hope he was happy. Roger of course has been painting hard. They are all now playing tip and run and I am sitting over the fire'.

Private collection
X103329

[VITRINE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

In 1910, **The Sketch** magazine ran a profile on the European artists featured in **Manet and the Post-Impressionists**. It noted that artists including Édouard Manet, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse and Vincent van Gogh were 'giving amusement to all London'. This article is shown alongside letters and photographs from the Bloomsbury Group's trips to Studland Beach, Brandon Camp and Asheham House. They record the friendships, experiences and conversations that informed Vanessa and Duncan's artistic development.

7

Clockwise from top left

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant with a vase of flowers at Asheham House

1913–14
Facsimile photograph

Photograph of Duncan Grant, Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, Julian Fry, Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell at Asheham House

1913
Facsimile photograph

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/768, Z92373
Tate Archive TGA 9020/4, Z92374

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Duncan Grant from Asheham House

1 September 1912
Ink on paper, and facsimile

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa Bell at Brandon Camp

Photograph of Daphne and Noël Olivier at Brandon Camp

1913
Facsimile photographs

Tate Archive TGA 20078/1/44/11, Z92375, Z92377
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/498, Z92378
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1524, Z92379

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Adrian Stephen and Daphne Olivier at Brandon Camp

Photograph of Duncan Grant at Brandon Camp

1913
Facsimile photographs

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Clive Bell from Brandon Camp

12 August 1913

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/506, Z92380
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/504, Z92381
Tate Archive TGA 8010/2/112, Z92387–8

Catalogue for 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists', Grafton Galleries, 8 November 1910–15 January 1911

1910
Ink on paper

'Giving Amusement to all London: Paintings by Post-Impressionists', The Sketch

16 November 1910
Facsimile

Tate Library, Z92394
Chronicle / Alamy, Z92395

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Clive Bell, Desmond MacCarthy, Marjorie Strachey and Molly MacCarthy sitting on the beach at Studland Bay, Dorset

Photograph of Saxon Sydney-Turner, Clive and Julian Bell and Virginia Woolf at Studland Bay, Dorset

1910
Facsimile photographs

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1124, Z92392
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/9, Z92393

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Roger Fry painting by the sea at Studland Bay, Dorset

1911
Facsimile photograph

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Duncan Grant from Harbour View, Studland, Dorset

7 September 1911
Ink on paper, and facsimile

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1124, Z92391
Tate Archive TGA 20078/1/44/4, Z92389, Z92390

[MONOLITH WALL 1 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

Vanessa Bell

The Bathers, Studland Beach

c.1911
Oil paint on cardboard

Studland Beach

c.1912
Oil paint on canvas

Private collection
X102463
Tate. Purchased 1976
T02080

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Vanessa visited Studland Beach in Dorset four times between 1909 and 1911. These paintings depict her friends and family relaxing by the sea. The luminous colours of the earlier work suggest the influence of Paul Gauguin's paintings of Tahiti. In the later version, Vanessa simplified the figures and seascape, reflecting her increasingly abstract style. The foreground likely depicts her son Julian and his nurse, Mabel Selwood. When it was first exhibited, **Studland Beach** was considered one of the most radical paintings in Britain.

Duncan Grant

Lady Ottoline Morrell

1913
Oil paint on panel

Duncan depicts the aristocrat and arts patron Lady Ottoline Morrell seated against a green wall in his studio at 38 Brunswick Square. Known for her eccentric tastes, she wears a yellow plumed hat and stark black dress. Duncan originally attached a string of artificial pearls, the imprint of which can still be seen. He painted the portrait during several lively sittings. Ottoline recalled in her memoir: 'Duncan had more charm and humour, more childish enjoyment of life than anyone I knew.'

Private collection
X102640

Vanessa Bell

A Conversation

c.1913–16
Oil paint on canvas

Three women are absorbed in conversation beside an open window, overlooking a flowering garden. Vanessa gives no clues to their identities, location or relationship. Virginia observed that although her sister's works were 'immensely expressive … no stories are told; no insinuations are made'. The Bloomsbury Group believed that art could evoke emotion and meaning without depicting a particular narrative.

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102523

[MONOLITH WALL 2 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

Duncan Grant

Iris Tree (1897–1968)

1915
Oil paint on board

Vanessa Bell

Iris Tree

1915
Oil paint on canvas

Reading Museum, Reading Borough Council, acquired with the assistance of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund
X102459
Tate. On long term loan from a private collection 2000
L02306

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Iris Tree was an actor, poet and model who embodied the bohemian spirit of the early 20th century. Here, she sports her distinctive bobbed haircut and a black tunic dress. She sat for both artists at once, with Vanessa positioned to Duncan's right. The portraits reveal their strikingly different approaches to painting. Vanessa depicts Iris and her surroundings using considered blocks of colour while Duncan's brushwork is scratchier and more spontaneous.

Vanessa Bell

Portrait of Molly MacCarthy

1914–15

Gouache, oil paint and collage on board

This is the only known portrait by Vanessa made entirely from painted collage. She shows Molly MacCarthy absorbed in needlework in room decorated with textiles produced at the Omega Workshops. For a time, Molly and Clive Bell were lovers. Vanessa wrote wryly to Virginia: 'Molly's visit was quite successful though she and Clive did not have all the tête-à-têtes they had hoped for.' She remained an important member of the Bloomsbury Group and a close friend of Vanessa and Duncan throughout their lives.

Private collection, courtesy Piano Nobile, London
X103561

Vanessa Bell

Mrs St John Hutchinson

1915
Oil paint on board

The Bloomsbury Group embraced liberal attitudes to sex and relationships. Vanessa told Clive of her relationship with Duncan, and she knew of his affairs, including his long-term relationship with Mary Hutchinson. Although Vanessa accepted the arrangement, she did not always see eye to eye with Mary. When this portrait was first exhibited, Vanessa wrote: 'It's perfectly hideous … and yet quite recognisable.'

Tate. Purchased 1973
T01768

[PLINTH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

Duncan Grant

Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting with Sound

1914
Gouache and watercolour on paper on canvas

Film of the Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting with Sound 1914

1974
Film
Duration: 6 mins, 2 secs

Tate. Purchased 1973
T01744
Tate Archive
Z92396

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

In 1914, Vanessa wrote to Roger that Duncan had ‘started on a long painting which is meant to be rolled up after the manner of those Chinese paintings and seen by degrees. It is purely abstract.’ Also known as ‘The Scroll’, it was designed to be seen through an aperture, moving between two rollers as a continuous composition. The music of Johann Sebastian Bach accompanies the movement of the abstract shapes in this filmed reconstruction. Tate Gallery made the film in 1974, under Duncan’s supervision, to preserve the fragile paper scroll from damage.

4
THE OMEGA WORKSHOPS

CLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

[WALL TEXT]

4
THE OMEGA WORKSHOPS

In 1913, Vanessa and Duncan joined the Omega Workshops, a design collective founded by fellow Bloomsbury Group artist and critic Roger Fry. The Workshops brought the bold colours and shapes of avant-garde painting into the home. 'It is time that the spirit of fun was introduced into furniture and into fabrics,' Roger declared. 'We have suffered too long from the dull and the stupidly serious.'

The Workshops were based at 33 Fitzroy Square in London. A showroom allowed the public to browse handmade, decorative objects designed by artists. The space also hosted exhibitions and talks. Vanessa and Duncan acted as co-directors, creating abstract designs that were applied to furniture, textiles, ceramics and other household items.

The Workshops employed artists including Henri Doucet, Nina Hamnett, Winifred Gill and Wyndham Lewis. They were able to earn an income creating decorative items while continuing to develop their artistic practices. They signed works with the Greek letter Ω (Omega), rather than their names, to emphasise their collaborative ethos.

Although the Omega Workshops became an important centre for modern design in Britain, financial struggles during the First World War led to its closure in 1919.

[STAGE]

Duncan Grant

Folding screen

1913
Gouache on paper on four wood panels (front);
oil and acrylic (back)

Painted screens were among the most distinctive items produced by the Omega Workshops. Treated like a three-dimensional painting, they offered artists a large surface for ambitious designs. Duncan's four-panelled screen features two angular figures carrying a bucket, painted in vivid colours and jagged cross-hatching. The screen appears in photographs of the opening of the Omega's showroom (displayed nearby). Duncan moved the screen to his Fitzroy Street studio before later taking it to Charleston.

The Charleston Trust
X110304

Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry

Omega Workshops painted desk

c.1912
Paint on wood

Duncan Grant, embroidered
by Marie Moralt

Embroidered fire screen

1915–20
Wool on linen

The Charleston Trust
X110309
Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110401

Vanessa Bell

Dancing Couple

1913
Gouache and oil paint on paper

Two dancers are locked in a close embrace, rendered in swooping curves that capture the movement of the dance. Vanessa painted this as a preliminary design for a large panel that would decorate the front of the Omega Workshops. With its modern, rhythmic style, it proclaimed the Workshops' allegiance to avant-garde art. Writing to Roger Fry, Vanessa joked that some found it 'hideous' and that 'we shall be stopped by the police'.

Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by Miss Margery Fry, J.P.
X110655

Vanessa Bell

‘Maud’ furnishing fabric

1913
Printed linen

Textiles were a vital part of the Omega’s output. Cushions, curtains, rugs, fire screens and even clothing became vehicles for bright colours and abstract patterns. Among the most successful were Vanessa’s printed linen designs. ‘Maud’ features a bold pattern of jagged triangles and dark lines, with feathered edges that imitate the sweep of a paintbrush. Designing a pattern that could be repeated while retaining a sense of spontaneity was complex and time-consuming. Vanessa confessed to Roger that ‘it’s rather fun painting after doing all these patterns.’

Private collection
X110731

[VITRINE]

From left to right

Duncan Grant or Roger Fry (attrib.)

Plate with overglaze geometric design enclosing Omega symbol

1913
Glazed earthenware with painted decoration

Omega Workshops

Vase

1913–14
Tin-glazed earthenware with lustre decoration

Plate

1913–19
Tin-glazed earthenware with lustre decoration

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102525
David Herbert Collection
X110477, X110476

Vanessa Bell (attrib.)

Vase

1913–14
Tin-glazed earthenware with lustre decoration

Duncan Grant

Vase

c.1914
Earthenware

David Herbert Collection
X110475
The Charleston Trust
X110310

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Roger Fry was the driving force behind the Omega's pottery production. In his 1910 exhibition, **Manet and the Post-Impressionists**, he made the unusual decision to include ceramics decorated by artists such as Henri Matisse and André Derain. At the Workshops, pottery was often sourced elsewhere and then painted with modern designs. Vanessa and Duncan drew inspiration from a wide variety of traditions, from delicate Persian lustreware to the bold decoration of Tunisian ceramics.

9

Duncan Grant

Spring Flowers in Omega Vase

c.1914
Oil paint and pencil on canvas

Private collection, Chicago
X110334

Omega Workshops

Omega lamp stand

1913–19
Wood marquetry

Vanessa Bell or Duncan Grant

‘Pamela’ furnishing fabric

1913, modern reproduction
Linen, cotton and nylon

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust, X110611
Fabric courtesy of the Charleston Shop

Wyndham Lewis

Robe

c.1913–14
Embroidered and block printed silk

A riot of animals, plants and figures adorn this silk robe, printed in clashing shades of orange, turquoise, pink and yellow. With its horizontal bands and bold outlines, the design combines influences from Indian block-printed textiles and the brightly coloured paintings of artists such as Henri Matisse. Wyndham Lewis created some of the Omega's earliest designs, including the Workshops' printed letterhead (displayed nearby). Following a disagreement with Roger Fry in 1913, he left to establish the rival Rebel Art Centre with Frederick Etchells and Edward Wadsworth.

Private collection
X110500

Omega Workshops

Lamp stands

1913–19
Turned, carved and painted wood

Roger Fry

Poster advertising an exhibition of Modern Paintings, Dresses and New Omega Pottery at Omega Workshops Ltd., 33 Fitzroy Square, London

1918
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum
X110660, X110659
Victoria and Albert Museum.
Given by Mrs Margaret H. Armitage (née Bulley)
X110661
Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by Miss Margery Fry, J.P.
X110663

[VITRINE]

From left to right

Roger Fry

Bowl with handles

c.1913–14
Glazed earthenware

Sauce boat

c.1914–15
Tin-glazed earthenware

Vase

c.1913
Tin-glazed earthenware

Plate

1915
Glazed earthenware

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110402
Victoria and Albert Museum
X110664
The Charleston Trust
X111066
David Herbert Collection
X110478

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Alongside its more decorative ceramics, the Omega produced a range of simpler, monochrome tableware. In the Workshops' catalogue, Roger criticised the mass production of pottery, which he felt had 'lost all direct expressiveness of surface modelling'. In late 1913, he began learning to throw clay on a potter's wheel, briefly joined by Vanessa, and collaborated with Carter & Co in Poole, Dorset, to create a new range of wares. He chose a limited palette of whites, blues and blacks, allowing the irregularities of the hand-thrown forms to show through the glaze.

Henri Doucet

Interior with Male Nude

c.1913
Oil paint on millboard

David Herbert Collection
X110671

Roger Fry

Chair

1913
Pine, cane

Omega chair

1913–19
Lacquered and painted pine and gilded cane

David Herbert Collection
X110473
Victoria and Albert Museum.
Given by Mrs Margaret H. Armitage (née Bulley).
X110656

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Some Omega pieces were made by professional furniture makers to designs by the workshop artists. This simple, cane-backed chair was designed by Roger Fry and produced by the Dryad Company in Leicester. Many were finished with red paint and gilding, inspired by Chinese lacquered furniture. Another version of the chair features a rhythmic pattern of arcs and dashes, possibly decorated by Henri Doucet. A similar pattern can be seen on the frame for his painting **Interior with Male Nude.**

Roger Fry

Wardrobe

1915–16
Painted wood

The Omega relied on support from wealthy patrons. In 1916, Lalla Vandervelde commissioned the Workshops to design the interior for her flat in Chelsea. Roger Fry undertook most of the work, creating detailed watercolour designs, displayed nearby. This wardrobe was likely part of the suite of furniture, decorated with bold floral motifs and a sponged finish imitating marble. Married to a Belgian government minister, Lalla had fled to London during the First World War, where she raised money for the Belgian Relief Fund.

Victoria and Albert Museum. Bequeathed by Mrs F.C.O. Speyer.
X110662

[WALL]

Duncan Grant

Design for a carpet

c.1916
Oil paint on paper

Vanessa Bell or Duncan Grant (attrib.)

Rug design

1913–15
Graphite and gouache on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by Miss Margery Fry, J.P.
X110666
The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102532

[WALL]

Duncan Grant

Fan

c.1913
Painted silk, ivory

Vanessa Bell

Design for a carpet

c.1914
Coloured inks and gouache on graph paper

David Herbert Collection
X110474
Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by Miss Margery Fry, J.P.
X110665

Vanessa Bell or Duncan Grant (attrib.)

Rug design

1913–15
Graphite, gouache and collage on paper

Roger Fry

Design with confronted peacocks

1913–14
Graphite and gouache on paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102528, X102530

10

[VITRINE AGAINST THE WALL]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

The opening of the Omega Workshops attracted widespread publicity and divided opinion. The **Daily Mail** described the showroom as 'the kind of room in which you could live, that is, if your nerves could stand it'. One of its first major commissions came from Lady Hamilton, whose lounge at Holland Park Hall was featured in a promotional postcard. After the outbreak of the First World War, women became central to the running of the Workshops. Artists Nina Hamnett and Winifred Gill were photographed modelling Omega fashions as part of its publicity campaign

Clockwise from top left

Duncan Grant

Fan

1913
Painted silk, ivory, metal, lace

Vanessa Bell or Duncan Grant

Menu card, probably to celebrate the opening of the Omega Workshops

1913
Ink on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by Lady Heathcote, X110657
Tate Archive TGA 731/1, Z92456

Postcard of lounge at Holland Park Hall by the Omega Workshops Ltd.

c.1914
Ink on cardboard

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa Bell in an Omega Workshops dress

Photograph of Nina Hamnett and Winifred Gill modelling Omega dresses at the Workshops

n.d.
Facsimile photographs

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust, X110403
© Reserved, Z92458
The Charleston Trust, Z92459

‘A Futurist Bedroom’, The Bystander

31 December 1913
Facsimile

‘A Post-Impressionist Flat: What Would the Landlord Think?’,
Daily Mirror

8 November 1913
Facsimile

© Illustrated London News Ltd. / Mary Evans, Z92461
The Daily Mirror, Z92455

Unknown photographer

Postcard of an unknown woman in front of an Omega design

1913–19
Ink on paper

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust, X110467

Roger Fry

Portrait of Nina Hamnett

1917
Oil paint on canvas

Nina Hamnett joined the Omega Workshops in 1913. Roger depicts her surrounded by Omega furnishings, including a cushion made from Vanessa's 'Maud' fabric. Her modern cropped haircut and resolute pose convey the confidence for which she was known. The dress was likely made by fellow artist Christine Kühlenthal. In a letter to her husband, John Nash, Christine wrote: 'who ever thought I'd turn into a dressmaker? All the morning I've been making a green, & yellow & black & white & khaki check dress for Nina Hamnett.'

University of Leeds Art Collection
X110644

Unknown photographer

Postcard of an unknown woman in front of an Omega design

1913–19
Ink on paper

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust

[VITRINE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

A photograph shows the opening of the Omega Workshops in July 1913. The showroom is filled with objects for sale, with Henri Doucet's curtains and folding screens decorated by Duncan and Wyndham Lewis among the painted furniture and textiles. Wealthy patrons such as Lalla Vandervelde commissioned entire interior schemes for their homes. Customers could also purchase smaller items, such as cushions and ceramics, from the Workshops' catalogue. Clockwise from top left

Clockwise from top left

Unknown photographer

Photograph of the opening room of the Omega Workshops, 33 Fitzroy Square, London

n.d.
Facsimile photograph

Duncan Grant

Omega Workshops exhibition invitation

1913
Hand-coloured lithograph

The Charleston Trust, Z92457
Private collection. On long-term loan to the Courtauld Gallery, London, X102526

Omega Workshops

Omega Workshops catalogue

1914
Printed leaflet

Roger Fry

Design for Lalla Vandervelde's Flat

1916
Graphite, watercolour and gouache on paper on cardboard

Tate Library, Z92460
The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102535

Nina Hamnett (attrib.)

Omega interior, illustration to Roger Fry's 'The Artist as Decorator', Colour

April 1917
Graphite and oil paint on cardboard

Roger Fry

Letter to Duncan Grant

1918
Ink on paper

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102533
Tate Archive TGA 801/9/1, Z92454

5
COMMISSIONS

CLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

[WALL TEXT]

5
COMMISSIONS

Throughout their careers, Vanessa and Duncan undertook paid artistic commissions for family, friends, patrons and institutions. These ambitious works include large-scale murals for public buildings and private interiors, as well as stage and costume designs and illustrated book covers.

Commissions were an important source of income for both artists but also enabled them to make art in new and unexpected ways. They allowed Vanessa and Duncan to work at different scales and further expand their practices beyond easel painting. Though many of their commissioned works were created individually, Vanessa and Duncan sometimes collaborated on projects. This resulted in works where the identity of the artist is unclear.

Vanessa and Duncan often made commissions for family and friends. Together, they decorated John Maynard Keynes's rooms at King's College, Cambridge. Later, their shared projects became a family endeavour. They worked with Vanessa's children to create murals for the interior of

Berwick Church. Her son Quentin later remembered the joy of working together:

'When we were all using the same model or working jointly on some decorative project… If I were asked to provide an example of human serenity and perfect happiness that is where I should look for it.'

Duncan Grant

Painted cupboard for Angus Davidson

1923–4
Oil paint on wood

Duncan painted this corner cupboard as part of the redecoration of Angus Davidson's home near King's Cross (see photographs displayed nearby). The scene draws upon characters from **commedia dell'arte**, an early form of Italian improvised theatre. Painted decorations frame a musician serenading a woman standing on a balcony above. Angus was a key figure in Bloomsbury's creative life, working as an editor and translator for Leonard and Virginia Woolf's publishing house, the Hogarth Press.

Portsmouth Museums, Portsmouth City Council.
Purchased with the assistance of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.
X102868

Dell & Wainwright

Photographs of Angus Davidson's residence, 3 Heathcote Street, London

Architectural Press Archive / RIBA Collections

Duncan Grant

Cupboard Doors (English Breakfast)

Cupboard Doors (Italian Breakfast)

c.1921
Oil paint on wood

Vanessa Bell

Cupboard Doors (French Breakfast)

Cupboard Doors (Turkish Breakfast)

c.1921
Oil paint on wood

The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge
X102454, X102456–8

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

John Maynard Keynes commissioned Vanessa and Duncan to decorate cupboard doors in his rooms at 46 Gordon Square. It was one of the few instances where they worked on the same scheme. They painted figures in front of famous sites of worship: St Paul's Cathedral, St Peter's Basilica, Notre-Dame de Paris and Hagia Sophia. The lower panels reflect their shared interest in domestic life, depicting traditional breakfasts from each country. The English, French and Turkish doors show tea or coffee with light refreshments, while the Italian door features wine and fruit.

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant

Eight Studies for Murals at John Maynard Keynes's rooms

1920
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa and Duncan collaborated on murals for Maynard's rooms in Webb's Court at King's College, Cambridge. Depicting the Muses of the Arts and Sciences, the designs reflect their admiration for Italian frescoes and Greco-Roman statues. Vanessa admitted that 'we're always changing their arts and their sciences', suggesting that visual harmony mattered more than accurate iconography. Vanessa painted the women and Duncan the men.

Private collection, courtesy of Philip Mould & Company
X103250

Duncan Grant

Design for a backdrop for Jacques Copeau's production of 'Twelfth Night'

1913
Gouache, crayon and graphite on paper

French theatre director Jacques Copeau invited Duncan to create set and costume designs for his production of Shakespeare's **Twelfth Night** at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris. Duncan's backdrop combines jagged abstract forms with two classical nudes standing in vibrant blue niches. Remembering the opening night, Copeau wrote: 'ten minutes before the curtain rose, Duncan Grant, smeared up to his eyes in paint, chased the actors with his brush to make final adjustments to the shade of their costume backs'.

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102536

Duncan Grant

Costume designs for the Cambridge production of Aristophanes's 'The Birds'

1923
Watercolour on paper

Duncan's experimental designs for Aristophanes's ancient Greek comedy **The Birds** brought the creative spirit of the Bloomsbury Group to the stage. Adapted by the New Theatre in Cambridge in 1924, the play follows two Athenians who tire of human society and persuade the birds to build a city in the sky. Duncan's playful costumes pushed his creativity to its limits. He recalled that the production has 'tax[ed] all my ideas to their uttermost'. **The Sketch** magazine praised his costume designs as 'brilliantly done'.

James L. Gordon
X109915–7`

Vanessa Bell

Backdrop design for ‘High Yellow’

1932
Oil paint on paper on board

Vanessa began to create designs for the stage in the 1930s. She first designed sets for **High Yellow**, a one-act jazz ballet performed at the Savoy Theatre in 1932. This colourful, large-scale design shows the deck of an ocean liner, with chairs, tables and potted trees arranged beneath its distinctive funnels. Although she found it ‘terrifying having so little experience’, she later concluded that ‘one’s problems are really just the same as those in any kind of decoration.’

James L. Gordon
X109918

12

Vanessa Bell

Costume designs for ‘Pomona’

1933
Watercolour and graphite on paper

Duncan Grant

Backdrop design for ‘Venus and Adonis’

1956
Ink on paper

James L. Gordon
X109919, X109922–3, X109925

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

In 1933, Vanessa designed the sets and costumes for the ballet **Pomona** at Sadler's Wells Theatre. It tells the tale of the god Vertumnus's attempt to seduce a nymph called Pomona, disguising himself as a Roman matron to approach her. A critic praised Vanessa's flowing designs as 'new and amusing' and 'engaging'.

The 1930s marked the end of Vanessa and Duncan's most intense period of making designs for the stage, although Duncan made designs for **Venus and Adonis** in 1956.

Vanessa Bell

Children Arranging Flowers

1929
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan Grant

The Toilet of Venus

1929
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa Bell

Bacchanale

1929
Oil paint on canvas

Southampton City Art Gallery
X102870–2

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, based on a design by Roger Fry

Chairs for Penns in the Rocks

1929
Wood and cane

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110405–6

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

These murals were commissioned by Lady Dorothy Wellesley for the dining room of her home, Penns in the Rocks, near Tunbridge Wells. The artists worked on the scheme together, Duncan creating the central panel of bathers and Vanessa painting the surrounding scenes of young followers of the Greco-Roman god Bacchus. In 1930, the murals were featured in **The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art**. This was one of the few times their shared projects were documented in the press. The commission included other painted furniture pieces, including these chairs.

Quentin Bell

The Wise and Foolish Virgins:
Design for the Berwick Church Murals

1942
Watercolour on paper

Vanessa Bell

Sketch for 'The Annunciation':
Design for the Berwick Church Murals

1942
Watercolour on paper

Sketch for 'The Nativity':
Design for the Berwick Church Murals

1942
Watercolour on paper

Towner Eastbourne
X103361, X103635–6

Duncan Grant

Christ in Glory: Design for Berwick Church Murals

1942
Watercolour on paper

During the Second World War, Vanessa, Duncan and their family worked together to decorate the interior of St Michael & All Angels Church in Berwick, East Sussex. It was one of the first historic country churches in Britain to be decorated by contemporary artists. The murals combine biblical scenes with a bold, modern style. Inspired by frescoes seen during their travels in Italy, they also drew upon their own lives. The artists photographed friends, relatives and local townspeople, using their images as models for figures throughout the church, which still stands today.

Towner Eastbourne
X103637

Duncan Grant

Bathing

Football

1911
Oil paint on canvas

In 1911, Duncan was offered his first major public commission when Roger Fry asked him to paint murals for the student dining hall at Borough Polytechnic. Based on the theme ‘London on Holiday’, the murals were inspired by Duncan’s summers spent in Hyde Park and by the Serpentine, which had been a male-only swimming spot associated with London’s gay subculture. He used rapid brushstrokes and repeated marks to suggest movement. Their muscular bodies recall Michelangelo’s work in the Sistine Chapel, which he had seen in Rome the previous year.

Tate. Purchased 1931
N04567, N04566

Duncan Grant

The Queen of Sheba

1912
Oil paint on plywood

Duncan painted **The Queen of Sheba** for a mural commission at Newnham College, a women's college at Cambridge University. The queen was modelled on his cousin Pernel Strachey, who was a tutor and later principal at the college, while the languid King Solomon was based on her brother Lytton. Duncan's dappled brushwork recalls the Byzantine mosaics he saw in Ravenna, which he described as 'the greatest decoration' he had ever seen. Although it was never installed at Newnham, the painting became the first work by Duncan to enter a public collection when it was given to Tate in 1917.

Tate. Presented by the Contemporary Art Society 1917
N03169

[VITRINE 1 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Vanessa designed covers and illustrations for many publications by her sister Virginia Woolf. Her bold, hand-printed designs rejected conventional typography in favour of expressive lettering and abstract forms. These showcases also include personally inscribed books from Virginia and a letter in which she proposes a new book, **Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street**. She notes that 'the title, I suppose, could be changed if necessary'. Virginia's novels were self-published through the Hogarth Press. Founded by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, the press enabled them to publish innovative books outside of the mainstream.

From top, left to right

Virginia Woolf, dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell

Vanessa Bell's copy of The Voyage Out

1915
Printed book

Night and Day

1919
Printed book

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust, X110407, X110417

Virginia Woolf

Vanessa Bell's copy of Night and Day

1919
Printed book

Virginia Woolf, dust jacket designed by Vanesa Bell

Kew Gardens

1919
Printed book

Monday or Tuesday

1921
Printed book

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110420, X110422, X110424

Virginia Woolf, dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell

Vanessa Bell's copy of Jacob's Room

1922
Printed book

T.S. Elliot's copy of Mrs Dalloway

1925
Printed book

Virginia Woolf

Letter proposing the book Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street

c.1925
Ink on paper

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110428, X110436, X110431

[VITRINE 2 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Vanessa designed covers and illustrations for many publications by her sister Virginia Woolf. Her bold, hand-printed designs rejected conventional typography in favour of expressive lettering and abstract forms. These showcases also include personally inscribed books from Virginia and a letter in which she proposes a new book, **Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street**. She notes that 'the title, I suppose, could be changed if necessary'. Virginia's novels were self-published through the Hogarth Press. Founded by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, the press enabled them to publish innovative books outside of the mainstream.

11

From top, left to right

Virginia Woolf, dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell

To the Lighthouse

1927
Printed book

Virginia Woolf

Noel Coward's copy of Orlando

Vanessa Bell's copy of Orlando

1928
Printed books

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110439, X110440, X110443

Virginia Woolf, dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell

Nancy Cunard's copy of A Room of One's Own

1929
Printed book

Clive Bell's copy of The Waves

1931
Printed book

Duncan Grant's copy of The Years

1937
Printed book

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110446, X110449, X110450

Virginia Woolf, dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell

Vanessa Bell's copy of Between the Acts

1941
Printed book

A Haunted House and Other Short Stories

1944
Printed book

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110452, X110454

[MONOLITH WALL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

Left to right

Vanessa Bell, embroidered by Ethel Grant

Chair seat

1924
Wool

Duncan Grant, embroidered by Ethel Grant

Mirror with an embroidered frame

n.d.
Glass and fabric

Vanessa Bell, embroidered by Ethel Grant

Long stool

1925
Polychrome wools and wood

Julia and Michael Pruskin, X109929
Private collection, X102644
Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust, X110404

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Following their work at the Omega Workshops, Vanessa and Duncan continued to produce designs for embroideries. Duncan's mother Ethel Grant often carried out the needlework, embroidering their designs on chairs, stools, mirrors and other decorative objects. She was proud of her son's growing success, writing: 'I cannot tell you my dear darling Dunk how much pleasure not to say pride your show is giving me … Please send me the design for back of chair and wool as soon as you can. I have finished the seat.'

Phyllis Keyes, painted by Duncan Grant

Vase

c.1932
Tin-glazed earthenware, painted

Phyllis Keyes, painted by Vanessa Bell

Vase

c.1932
Tin-glazed earthenware, painted

Victoria and Albert Museum.
Given by Mrs Margaret H. Armitage (née Bulley).
X110667, X110669

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

These earthenware vases were hand-made by the potter Phyllis Keyes and decorated by Vanessa and Duncan with designs of flowering plants. After meeting Phyllis in 1931, they frequently worked alongside her at a kiln in Lambeth, experimenting with differing colours and glazes. The shape of Duncan's vase was modelled on a two-handled vessel that he bought in Tunisia in 1914, on display in the previous room.

13

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant

Famous Women Dinner Service

1932–4
50 ceramic plates

Between 1932 and 1934, Vanessa and Duncan created a series of 50 hand-painted Wedgwood dinner plates for art historian Kenneth Clark. The artists chose to celebrate women from history, dividing the plates into four groups: 'Women of Letters', 'Queens', 'Beauties' and 'Dancers and Actresses'. They range from historic figures Marie Antoinette and Elizabeth I to their contemporaries Ellen Terry and Greta Garbo. Vanessa and Duncan also depicted themselves in two of the plates. Neither artist signed their plates, blurring the lines between their practices.

The Charleston Trust. Acquired with the support of Piano Nobile Gallery, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Art Fund.
X110472

6
A MATURE PALETTE

CLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

[WALL TEXT]

6
A MATURE PALETTE

After the First World War, Vanessa and Duncan moved away from abstraction and towards a more naturalistic style. Vanessa later explained that she 'had come to the conclusion that nature was much richer and more interesting than anything one could invent.' The artists' mature handling of paint brought to life scenes from home and abroad, charged with rhythmic energy and striking colours.

When Europe's borders reopened after the war, travel became a significant influence. Vanessa and Duncan frequently returned to Paris, renewing their connections with modern artists and immersing themselves in the avant-garde scene. During stays in Cassis and St Tropez with their family, they found fresh inspiration in the landscapes and golden light of the south of France. They also enjoyed travelling to Italy and Spain.

By this time, both artists were recognised by critics and collectors as being among the leading painters of the day. Virginia noted in her diary that 'Vanessa and Duncan are the trendsetters … everyone wants their pictures'.

The paintings in this room also capture changes in their family life. Vanessa and Duncan's daughter Angelica was born on Christmas Day in 1918. In London, they worked in adjoining studios, creating parallel scenes of their surroundings at 8 Fitzroy Street.

Vanessa Bell

On the Seine

1921
Oil paint on canvas

Le Pont Neuf, Paris

1921
Oil paint on canvas

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge
X110624
The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
Bequeathed by Frank Hindley Smith, 1939
X110623

Duncan Grant

Notre Dame, Paris

1921
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa and Duncan travelled to Paris many times throughout their careers. In May 1921, they painted scenes of the River Seine together. Vanessa wrote to Roger that she and Duncan had ‘spent a good deal of time sketching on the quais where I see one could go on finding new things indefinitely.’ The artists used a palette dominated by browns, greens and ochres, capturing the warm stone and light on the river and bridges near Notre-Dame de Paris.

Private collection
X102491

14

Vanessa Bell

Still Life at a Window

1922
Oil paint on canvas

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)
X102538

Vanessa Bell

Interior with a Table

1921
Oil paint on canvas

In the winter of 1921–2, Vanessa and Duncan rented La Maison Blanche, a villa just outside St Tropez on the southern French coast. Encouraged by Roger Fry, they painted in separate rooms to avoid influencing one another's work. This painting depicts the view from their villa, across the landscape to the gulf beyond. Vanessa wrote to Clive: 'It's delicious to be in the south … all the colours and the light and space and everything looking so baked through'.

Tate. Bequeathed by Frank Hindley Smith 1940
N05078

Duncan Grant

La Place de Furstenberg, Paris

1935
Oil paint on board

This painting shows the Parisian square where the 19th-century French artist Eugène Delacroix lived and worked. The entrance to his former house and studio, now a museum, can be seen in the background. Duncan became a great admirer of Delacroix after encountering his paintings in the Louvre.

Private collection
X103570

Duncan Grant

South of France

1922
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan depicts farm buildings and fields near their villa, La Maison Blanche. He found the landscape in the south of France ‘extraordinary’. Using a palette of warm browns and earth colours, he captures the dark shadows and crisp contrasts of the low winter sun, bringing a sense of boldness and modernity to the rural scene. While staying in the south of France without Vanessa, he shared: ‘I feel very mean painting in this marvellous light without you’.

Tate. Presented by the Contemporary Art Society 1929
N04443

15

Duncan Grant

View of St Tropez

1921–2
Oil paint on canvas

Private collection
X103571

Vanessa Bell

St Tropez Harbour

1928
Oil paint on board

Private collection
X103572

Duncan Grant

Granada

1936
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan toured southern Spain in April 1936. Arriving in Granada, he wrote to Vanessa describing his lodgings as ‘high up by the Alhambra’. Here, he depicts the famous palace and fortress from the elevated public square, Mirador de San Nicolás. Painted in loose brushstrokes, the tight cluster of geometric forms contrasts with the tangle of vegetation and hillside below. He reunited with Vanessa in Paris on his way home.

UK Government Art Collection
X110630

Vanessa Bell

Portrait of Angelica as a Russian Princess

1928
Oil paint on canvas

While holidaying in the south of France in 1928, Vanessa photographed her nine-year-old daughter Angelica. She is dressed as the character Princess Sasha, the lover of Orlando from her aunt Virginia's novel of the same name. Dressing up was a favourite pastime among the Bloomsbury circle. Gazing serenely, Angelica wears an elaborate headdress, fur coat and pearls. One of Vanessa's photographs from the series was reproduced in the first edition of **Orlando**, and another formed the basis for this painting.

Private collection
X49937

16

Vanessa Bell

The Memoir Club

c.1943
Oil paint on canvas

The Memoir Club was founded in 1920. It brought together the Bloomsbury Group's friends to share and critique literary works in progress. Unlike Bloomsbury's shifting cast of writers, artists and intellectuals, membership was strictly controlled: new members had to be voted in unanimously. The portraits on the wall depict Virginia, Lytton and Roger, honouring their legacy following their deaths. Loose brushstrokes draw the figures together, absorbed in conversation. Their turned backs and sofa create a barrier between the figures and the viewer, positioning us as observers of a private intellectual exchange.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London. Purchased with help from the Dame Helen Gardner Bequest, 2005
X102521

Vanessa Bell

Leonard Sidney Woolf

1940
Oil paint on canvas

Leonard Woolf married Virginia Stephen in August 1912. Together they founded the Hogarth Press, a pioneering publisher of modernist literature. Here, Leonard is absorbed in work, with a typewriter and papers spread across the desk. Their dog Sally sits faithfully beside him. Leonard encouraged Virginia's writing and cared for her during periods of mental illness. Virginia died by suicide in 1941. In her final letter to Leonard, she wrote, 'I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been.'

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London.
Given by Marjorie Tulip ('Trekkie') Parsons (née Ritchie), 1969
X102873

Vanessa Bell

No. 8 Fitzroy Street

c.1930
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan Grant

Still Life with Opel

1939
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa Bell

Interior, 8 Fitzroy Street

n.d.
Oil paint on canva

Towner Eastbourne
X103638
Private collection
X103664
Royal West of England Academy
X103351

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

In 1920, Duncan began renting a studio at 8 Fitzroy Street in Bloomsbury. It had previously been the studio of Walter Sickert and James McNeill Whistler. Vanessa moved into an adjoining studio in 1928. These intimate interior scenes offer a glimpse into the spaces they created. Paintings, textiles, ceramics, furniture and flowers fill the rooms. Many were objects they had made themselves or collected over the years. Duncan's folding screen, made at the Omega Workshops, appears in the background of Vanessa's **Interior, 8 Fitzroy Street**. The studio was destroyed in an aerial bombardment in September 1940, along with much of Vanessa's and Duncan's work.

[VITRINE 1 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

This showcase includes letters and postcards between Duncan and Vanessa during their time in Paris and the south of France. In a letter to Vanessa, Duncan describes and sketches La Bergère, a cottage in the hills, close to Cassis. The family leased La Bergère from 1927 and returned there for several winters to paint. Their life there is also captured in these photographs. They include a rare image of Vanessa and Duncan together, and another of Vanessa with all her children.

Clockwise from top left

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Duncan Grant with Vanessa Bell at La Bergère, Cassis, France

1928
Facsimile photograph

Duncan Grant

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

25 May 1937
Ink on cardboard

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1134, Z92397
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1742, Z92398

Duncan Grant

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

14 October 1927
Ink on cardboard

Letter to Vanessa Bell

17 October 1927
Ink on paper, and facsimile

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa Bell seated near a window in Cassis, France

1928
Facsimile photograph

Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1412, Z92399
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1415, Z92400–1
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/371, Z92402

Duncan Grant

Photograph of Julian, Quentin, Angelica and Vanessa Bell seated at a table in the garden in Cassis, France

1928
Facsimile photograph

Vanessa Bell

Photograph of Duncan Grant painting at an easel in a field at Cassis, France

Photograph of La Bergère, Cassis, France

1928
Facsimile photographs

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/184, Z92403
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1847, Z92404
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1831, Z92405

Leaflet for Vanessa Bell exhibition held at the Lefevre Gallery

1936–7
Printed leaflet

Vanessa Bell

Photograph of Pont Neuf bridge in Paris, France

n.d.
Facsimile photograph

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust, X110466
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/1347, Z92410

Duncan Grant

Letter to Vanessa Bell

21 April 1935
Facsimile, and ink on paper

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

30 January 1938
Ink on cardboard

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

2 January 1925
Ink on cardboard

Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1665, Z92408–9
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1772, Z92406
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1455, Z92407

[VITRINE 2 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Vanessa and Duncan's correspondence reveals their enthusiasm for Italian art and architecture. One of Duncan's sketchbooks depicts Piazza del Popolo, one of the largest squares in Rome. The postcards show the Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome and Villa Adriana just outside the city. In Venice, they walked the streets, visiting churches and sketching activity on the canals.

Clockwise from top left

Duncan Grant

Sketchbook

1920s
Graphite on paper

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Roger Fry from Hotel de Russie, Rome

24 March 1920
Ink on paper, and facsimile

Tate Archive, Purchased with funds provided by The Rothschild Foundation and Kim Jones, Vice President of the Charleston Trust 2026. TGA 20262/2/3/9, Z92411
Tate Archive TGA 8010/8/304, Z92412–3

Vanessa Bell

Photograph of Angelica Bell standing on a balcony in Rome, Italy

1935
Facsimile photograph

Duncan Grant

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

26 July 1935
Ink on cardboard

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

5 August 1935
Ink on cardboard

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/304, Z92414
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1687, Z92415
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1695, Z92416

Duncan Grant

Sketchbook

c.1914
Graphite on paper

Letter to Vanessa Bell

1948
Ink on paper

Vanessa Bell

Venetian Canal with Bridge

n.d.
Chalk on paper

Tate Archive, Purchased with funds provided by The Rothschild Foundation and Kim Jones, Vice President of the Charleston Trust 2026. TGA 20262/2/3/3, Z92417
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1833, Z92420–1
University of Leeds Art Collection, X110645

Duncan Grant

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

2 May 1926
Ink on cardboard

Postcard to Vanessa Bell

30 April 1926
Ink on cardboard

Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1385, Z92418
Tate Archive TGA 8010/5/1383, Z92419

[MONOLITH WALL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

Duncan Grant

Venetian Canal

c.1920
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa Bell

Venice

c.1929
Oil paint on board

On loan from The Radev Collection
X103665
Yale Center for British Art, Bequest of Joseph F. McCrindle,
Yale LLB 1948
X103252

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

These two paintings depict the same view from an upstairs window at the hotel Pensione Seguso, where Vanessa and Duncan regularly stayed while visiting Venice. They capture the changing light on the canal, the pastel-coloured buildings and the gentle movement of pedestrians and gondolas below. While Vanessa's painting includes an expanse of sky and a distant bell tower, Duncan's composition is more unusual. He shifts the view downwards, removing the horizon and focusing instead on a still life arrangement on the window ledge.

Vanessa Bell

The Forum, Rome

c.1935
Oil paint on canvas

In 1935, Vanessa and Duncan spent several weeks on a family holiday in Rome. Although they were working on a mural commission for the Queen Mary ocean liner, they painted the city in their spare time. This work depicts the church of Santa Francesca Romana, viewed from across the Forum. Vanessa made many trips to Italy, later writing to her friend Helen Anrep: 'nearly every building is wonderful in a slightly austere way … We find the only thing to do is get up at 6 and go out painting early. Then one loafs about and wanders into cool churches'.

The Charleston Trust
X110311

Duncan Grant

Portrait of Dr Marie Moralt

1919
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa Bell

Portrait of Mrs M.

1919
Oil paint on canvas

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge
X110629
Private collection, courtesy of Philip Mould & Company
X103251

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Dr Marie Moralt first came to Charleston in December 1918 when Vanessa and Duncan's newborn daughter Angelica fell seriously ill. To overcome prejudice against women doctors, Vanessa pretended to know Marie well. By the time Marie had saved Angelica's life, this pretence had become reality. These portraits were painted together in May 1919, when Marie returned to visit the family. During her visit, she also embroidered a fire screen designed by Duncan (displayed in 'The Omega Workshops' room). In both portraits, particular attention is given to Marie's hands: instruments of both healing and making.

7
VERY PRIVATE

CONTENT GUIDANCE
Artworks in this room contain
sexually explicit content

CLOCKWISE FROM ROOM ENTRANCE

[WALL TEXT]

7
VERY PRIVATE

Duncan lived at a time when sex between men was illegal in Britain. Although he could openly express his identity as a gay man among the Bloomsbury Group, he felt the strain of concealing his sexuality in public. 'You cannot imagine how much I want to scream sometimes,' he wrote. 'One has to hide one's whole philosophy of life.'

The works in this room show Duncan's depictions of the male body and the ways erotic desire could be explored through observation or imagination. He returned to the male nude throughout his career, painting idealised bathers as well as intimate portraits of friends and lovers.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Duncan produced more than 400 drawings of nude figures embracing or having sex. The poses are playful and acrobatic, drawing on sources including

muscle magazines, Greco-Roman sculpture and classical mythology. Most depict men, although some drawings include a man and a woman. Others portray encounters between white and Black men, raising questions about race and objectification.

These works reveal a side of Duncan's life and art beyond his long-term partnership with Vanessa. Their relationship was non-traditional but steadfast, reflecting the Bloomsbury Group's progressive attitudes towards love and sexuality. Despite this, Duncan's sexuality sometimes led to emotional tensions between them. His erotic drawings were never intended for public display. Duncan gave them to his friend Edward Le Bas for safekeeping, marked with a note: 'These drawings are very private.'

17

Duncan Grant

Self-Portrait

c.1932
Charcoal on paper

Ömer Koç Collection
X103558

Duncan Grant

Standing Male Nude (Study of Tony Asserati)

c.1935
Oil paint on canvas

In this nude studio portrait, Charles 'Tony' Asserati stands against a vibrant blue background. A body builder and model, he became a frequent subject in Duncan's later work. Tony's athletic physique and relaxed pose reflect Duncan's long-standing interest in capturing the male form. The towel hanging loosely from his hand suggests that the portrait was made following a bath or a swim in Charleston's pond.

The Charleston Trust
X110360

Duncan Grant

Male Nude

1930
Oil paint on canvas

Duncan depicts the back of a male figure against a rich green background, emphasising the contours of his body. Many interwar British painters worked with Black models, who were celebrated for their beauty and may reflect the changing character of modern metropolitan life. The model has sometimes been identified as Patrick Nelson, a Jamaican-born law student who had a romantic relationship with Duncan. However, the two probably did not meet until several years after this painting was made.

From the JWM Collection by kind permission of the Master and Fellows, St Peter's College, University of Oxford
X110571

Duncan Grant

Selection of **Untitled** explicit nudes

1946–59
Various media on paper

The Charleston Trust
X110312–3, X110315, X110317–9, X110320–8, X110330,
X110332, X110352–8

Duncan Grant

Two Bathers

1921
Oil paint on canvas

Bathers by the Pond

c.1920–1
Oil paint on canvas

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, (Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council 1985)
X64286
The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge
X102450

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Duncan imagines groups of men relaxing, swimming and sunbathing at Charleston's pond. In 1921, Vanessa mentioned **Two Bathers** in a letter to Roger Fry: 'Duncan is painting a picture of 2 nudes by a pond rather under the influence of Seurat I think - very odd pale relief. I hope he means to paint a large group out of doors.' A couple of years earlier, Duncan had convinced Maynard to buy an oil study by Georges Seurat which may have inspired these scenes.

8
CHARLESTON

ANTICLOCKWISE FROM WALL TEXT

[WALL TEXT]

8
CHARLESTON

For almost five decades, Charleston was the centre of Vanessa and Duncan's shared domestic and artistic life. The 16th-century farmhouse in East Sussex was their family home, a setting for creative experimentation and a vibrant gathering place for the Bloomsbury Group

During the First World War, Vanessa searched for a home in the countryside within easy reach of London. The artists moved to Charleston in 1916, allowing Duncan to undertake agricultural work on a nearby farm instead of military service. 'It really is so lovely that I must show it to you soon', Vanessa wrote excitedly to Roger Fry after seeing the house for the first time. 'The pond is most beautiful … Then there's a small orchard and the walled garden'.

Over the years, Vanessa and Duncan transformed Charleston into a living artwork, filled with murals, painted furniture, patterned textiles and other handmade decorations. The house and its gardens also became a key subject in their work, and the background for portraits of friends, family and lovers.

It was a place where the Bloomsbury Group's ideas about creativity, collaboration and unconventional living could be put into practice.

After their deaths, the Charleston Trust was formed to preserve the house and its unique artworks and decorations. It opened to the public in 1986 as a museum celebrating the legacy of Vanessa, Duncan and the wider Bloomsbury circle.

Vanessa Bell

Charleston, East Sussex

c.1950–5
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa painted this view of Charleston across the shimmering pond. A figure, possibly Duncan or Clive, stands in front of the house and looks out. The scene recalls Vanessa's description of the property when they first moved in: 'A large lake, an orchard, trees all round the back house and farm buildings'. When they arrived, Charleston had no electricity, hot water or telephone. Vanessa nevertheless believed it 'could be made quite lovely'. Over time, she and Duncan transformed the farmhouse into a family home.

The Charleston Trust
X110361

Duncan Grant

Lessons in the Orchard

1917
Oil paint on canvas

This painting was created during the summer after the artists moved to Charleston. It shows Vanessa's sons, Julian and Quentin, having lessons in the orchard with their governess, Mabel Selwood. Warm orange and yellow paint captures a moment of peace and family life during the turbulence of the First World War. Duncan made only a few paintings during the war. As a conscientious objector, most of his days were spent working on a nearby farm as part of the conditions of his exemption from military service.

The Charleston Trust
X110362

Duncan Grant

The Lane, Charleston

1918
Oil paint on canvas

Private collection
X102694

Vanessa Bell

Stackyard, Charleston

c.1919
Oil paint on canvas

Kim Jones on behalf of The Charleston Trust
X110469

Roger Fry

The Farm Pond, Charleston

1918
Oil paint on canvas

Roger's view across the pond captures the farm buildings around Charleston. Geometric blocks of colour echo the radical style Vanessa and Duncan experimented with. Roger described Charleston as 'the most peaceful domestic existence conceivable … It might be held up as a model of what family life ought to be.' He was supportive of their unusual living arrangement and called it 'a triumph of reasonableness over the conventions'. He remained a regular visitor to Charleston until his death in 1934.

Wakefield Council Permanent Art Collection
(The Hepworth Wakefield). Purchase, 1937.
X103358

Duncan Grant

The Hammock, Charleston

c.1921–3
Oil paint on canvas

This landscape celebrates family life at Charleston. Vanessa relaxes in a hammock, as her children play around her. Angelica can be seen pulling a toy down the garden path while Quentin sits at his mother's feet. In the background, Julian quietly punts across the pond in a small boat. They are accompanied by Sebastian Sprott who was briefly the boys' tutor. The surrounding landscape of the South Downs, visible in the background, inspired many of Duncan's and Vanessa's works.

North East Museums, Laing Art Gallery
X103253

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Painted a few years apart, these views from the studio at Charleston look out onto the luscious garden. Both artists used the thresholds of doorways and windows to explore the relationship between interior and exterior spaces. They approached the subject differing ways. Vanessa renders the scene in warm, sunlit tones, while Duncan's composition is dominated by the abundant foliage beyond. Both include empty chairs, suggesting a missing presence.

Vanessa Bell

View into a Garden

1926
Oil paint on board

Duncan Grant

The Doorway

1929
Oil paint on canvas

On loan from Bolton Library & Museum Services
X102863
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London
X102623

Duncan Grant

Julian Bell Reading

c.1930
Oil paint on canvas

This portrait was probably painted during the summer holidays, when Julian was home from studying at King's College, Cambridge. Seated in the garden at Charleston, he appears quietly absorbed in reading. Julian was deeply engaged with the political issues of his time. Despite his parents' pacifist beliefs, he felt compelled to fight against fascism following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, he volunteered as an ambulance driver but was killed by a bomb only a month after arriving in Spain. His death devastated Vanessa.

The Charleston Trust
X110363

Vanessa Bell

Henrietta and Julian by the Garden Pool, Charleston

1958
Oil paint on paper

In her later years, Vanessa painted scenes of her grandchildren in a style that recalls her early artistic experiments. Here, Henrietta and Julian play in the garden at Charleston. The work was likely painted in summer holidays when the families came to visit Vanessa and Duncan. The children sit in front of the garden pond, at the bottom of a sloping lawn that descends from the house. A classical Greco-Roman torso stands among the bright flowers and foliage, highlighting the connection between art and nature at Charleston.

Private collection
X103557

STUDIO

[WALL TEXT]

THE STUDIO

Vanessa and Duncan built a studio on the ground floor of Charleston in 1925. Designed by Roger Fry, it became the creative heart of the house, where they painted, welcomed friends and exchanged ideas. Their daughter Angelica called it ‘the citadel of the house, the sanctuary in which I spent the most treasured hours of my life.’

More than a century later, the building that houses the studio is undergoing essential conservation to safeguard it for future generations. While this work takes place at Charleston, Tate has the rare opportunity to restage the studio as part of this exhibition.

The painted walls and mantelpiece have been faithfully recreated, along with Vanessa’s murals, while every object on display has been relocated from Charleston. They include the painted fireplace surround by Duncan and a bust of Virginia Woolf. Visitors are invited to experience the studio as Vanessa and Duncan used it in the 1950s.

On the easel sits Portrait of a Lady 1959, one of Duncan's last portraits of Vanessa. The portrait and the studio in which it was painted reflect the artists' enduring relationship and the creative life they built together, in which art and the everyday were inseparable.

Please see separate list of works



Vanessa Bell

Quentin Bell (1910–1996) Reading

c.1936–8
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa and Clive's second son, Quentin, stands reading against the bookcase in the studio. Watching Vanessa and Duncan make art, he compared them to 'two sturdy animals side by side in a manger, munching away contentedly, not needing to talk to each other but just happy in the presence of the other'. Quentin later became an academic and writer, publishing books on the Bloomsbury Group and Charleston. He also made art, establishing a kiln at Charleston to create ceramics. Vanessa gave this painting to Virginia as a birthday present.

National Trust Collections, Monk's House
(The Virginia & Leonard Woolf Collection)
X110654

19

Vanessa Bell

Interior with the Artist's Daughter

c.1935–6
Oil paint on canvas

Vanessa paints her 17-year-old daughter Angelica reading in the studio at Charleston. Angelica grew up believing that her father was Clive Bell. However, a year after this painting was made, Vanessa revealed that Duncan was her biological father. Angelica later married Bunny Garnett, unaware at the time of his earlier relationship with Duncan. She reflected on the complexities of her upbringing in her 1984 memoir **Deceived with Kindness**. She wrote: 'There are moments when I feel hard done by, and others when I recognise that Vanessa meant me no harm. It was a sin of omission'.

The Charleston Trust. Gift of Dick Chapman and Ben Duncan
X110365

Vanessa Bell

The Kitchen at Charleston, East Sussex

c.1943
Oil paint on canvas

Grace Higgens (née Germany) was first employed as a domestic servant at 46 Gordon Square when she was 16 years old. She developed a close relationship with Vanessa and her children, moving with them to Charleston and often joining the family on trips abroad. Her tireless work as their housekeeper enabled Vanessa, Duncan and their friends to focus on their creative work. Grace was known as the 'Angel of Charleston' and recalled being 'very fond of them all'. She retired in 1970 after 50 years of service.

The Charleston Trust
X110364

[VITRINE 1 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Charleston was a hive of activity, where friends and family often came to stay. These photographs capture conversations, lively performances staged in the walled garden and memories of punting on the pond together. One letter recalls the memorable story of Maynard arriving at Charleston and leaving a painting by Cézanne in a hedge at the bottom of the lane because his arms were full.

Clockwise from top left

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Duncan Grant

c.1916
Facsimiles, and ink on paper

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Judith Stephen standing with Quentin, Julian, Vanessa and Angelica Bell at Charleston

1924
Facsimile photograph

Tate Archive TGA 20078/1/44/53, Z92431–3
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/183, Z92434

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Molly MacCarthy, Roger Fry, Desmond MacCarthy and Clive Bell sitting on the terrace at Charleston

1933
Facsimile photograph

Vanessa Bell

Photograph of Frances Partridge, Quentin and Julian Bell, Duncan Grant, Clive Bell, Beatrice Mayo, Roger Fry and Raymond Mortimer at Charleston

1928
Facsimile photograph

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/439, Z92435
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/303, Z92436

Vanessa Bell

Photograph of Julian Bell, Janie Bussy, Angelica and Quentin Bell performing a play in the walled garden of Charleston

1935
Facsimile photograph

Quentin Bell

'The Honourable Father', from 'Charleston Bulletin'

n.d.
Ink and watercolour on paper

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/36, Z92437
Tate Archive TGA 20078/3/1, Z92438

Vanessa Bell

Photograph of Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey sitting outside at Charleston

1927
Facsimile photograph

Photograph of Julian Bell, Anne Brereton and Quentin Bell on a boat on a pond at Charleston

1919
Facsimile

The Pond at Charleston

c.1955
Oil paint on canvas

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/350, Z92439
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/824, Z92441
The Charleston Trust, X110369

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Roger Fry

1917
Facsimile, and ink on paper

Letter to Duncan Grant, with an ink drawing of the garden layout at Charleston

c.1916
Ink on paper

Tate Archive TGA 8010/8/267, Z92443–4
Tate Archive TGA 20078/1/44/53, Z92442

[VITRINE 2 IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM]

[EXTENDED CAPTION]

Vanessa's sons, Julian and Quentin Bell, wrote a newsletter called **The Charleston Bulletin**. Filled with playful illustrations, it recorded daily life at Charleston through the children's eyes. They wrote about growing up among the Bloomsbury circle and sometimes featured contributions from visitors such as Virginia, Roger or Maynard. This showcase also includes photographs of Charleston and letters about Vanessa and Duncan's plans to redecorate the house.

Clockwise from top left

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Charleston farmhouse

1972
Facsimile photograph

Quentin Bell

‘Charleston Bulletin’

13 August 1930
Ink and watercolour on paper

‘Extract from the New Bulletin’, No.3

1 August 1927
Ink on paper

Tate Archive TAPH/LOCATIONS/FIRLE/CHARLESTON/1/2, Z92422
Tate Archive TGA 20078/3/1, Z92423–4

Barbara Bagenal

Photograph of the fireplace within the studio at Charleston farmhouse

Photograph of Duncan Grant's studio at Charleston farmhouse

n.d.
Facsimile photographs

Tate Archive TAPH/ARTISTA-Z/BAGENAL/1/4, Z92424
Tate Archive TAPH/ARTISTA-Z/BAGENAL/1/2, Z92426

Unknown photographer

Photograph of Vanessa Bell painting in her studio at Charleston

1936
Facsimile photograph

Vanessa Bell

View of the Garden Room at Charleston

1950
Oil paint on card

Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/366, Z92427
The Charleston Trust, X110368

Vanessa Bell

Letter to Roger Fry

c.1917
Ink on paper, and facsimile

Photograph of Duncan Grant sitting on a table outside the drawing room at Charleston

1933–5
Facsimile photograph

Tate Archive TGA 8010/8/262, Z92429, Z92430
Tate Archive TGA 9020/11/325, Z92428

VANESSA BELL & DUNCAN GRANT: INSIDE BLOOMSBURY

CURATORIAL TEAM

Thomas Kennedy, Curator, Modern British Art, with Eliza Spindel, Assistant Curator, Modern British Art, supported by Nicole Kitsberg and Laura Laing, Exhibitions Assistants, and Alisha O'Brien-Coker, Curatorial Assistant

EXHIBITION REGISTRAR

Laura Temperán

COLLECTION & DISPLAYS REGISTRARS

Giulia Caverni, Caroline McCarthy

INTERPRETATION

Hannah McGivern, Sandra Sykorova, Fernanda Velasco

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Keziah Barrett, Bethan Bowers, Kristine Omandap

PAPER & PHOTOGRAPH CONSERVATION

Arantza Dobbels Busto, Ibby Doherty, Elsa Money, Jacqueline Moon, Simon Philpott, Sophie Sarkodie

PAINTING, FRAMES & WORKSHOP CONSERVATION

Amy Griffin, Thomas Hilling, Dan Horner, Alastair Johnson,

Gabriella Macaro, Jane McCree, Kevin Miles, Alex Seeland, Genevieve Tobin

SCULPTURE CONSERVATION
Miyuki Kajiwara, Roger Murray, Gates Sofer

CONSERVATION SCIENCE & PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION
Sarah Bashir, Annabel McGrath, Joyce Townsend

PHOTOGRAPHY & IMAGING
Megeara Amis, Oliver Cowling, Sam Day, Yili Liu, Tori Miller, Jai Monaghan, Seraphina Neville

LIBRARY & ARCHIVE
Katie Blackford, Assunta Ferrera, Adrian Glew, Victoria Jenkins, Annie McCoid, Darragh O'Donoghue

DIGITAL
Susan Doyon, Freya Hellier, Saskia Mercuri, Scott Morris

AV
Adnan Abdullahi, Gareth Fox, Pete Triggs

EXHIBITION INSTALLATION
Mikei Hall, Kwai Lau, Bella Probyn, Andy Shiel, Rose Stuart-Smith, Liam Tebbs, Dale Wilson

ART HANDLING
Lilian Baldwin, Grace Blamey, William Cunningham, Paul Duncan, Alfred Golding, Alex Goodall, Patricia Gregory, Patrick Higgs, Nathan Jones, Sarah Kingham, Sanchez Lee Nelson, Alex McCloskey, David Miles, Sondliwe Pamisa, Maja Quille, Simon Rattigan, Lucas Reynes-Matter, Jack Severn, Ben Waggett

BUILD
MCD Heritage Ltd

GRAPHICS PRINTING & INSTALLATION
KGK Genix

LIGHTING
Dalkia UK