



**MODERN BRITISH  
MASTERS**



# MODERN BRITISH MASTERS

25th November - 17th December 2021

UPSTONE





I.

## **Christopher Wood 1901-1930**

*Church at Tréboul* 1930

Oil on board 21 x 28 ½ inches (53 x 72 cm)

### **PROVENANCE**

Purchased from the Artist by Winifred Reitlinger August 1930 and given as a wedding present to Captain and Mrs Stephen Roskill; by descent.

### **EXHIBITED**

*Memorial Exhibition of The Most Recent Paintings by Christopher Wood, Alex, Reid & Lefevre, London, April 1932; Christopher Wood: Exhibition of Complete Works, New Burlington Galleries, London, March-April 1938 (10); Christopher Wood: Paintings and Drawings, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, July-August 1974; Christopher Wood, The Minorities, Colchester, March-April, DLI Museum, Durham, June-July, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, July-August, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, August-September 1979 (60).*

### **LITERATURE**

Eric Newton, *Christopher Wood 1901-1930*, London 1938 no.435.

This picture was bought from Christopher Wood in August 1930 by his friend Winifred 'Doodie' Reitlinger to give as a wedding present to a friend. In a letter that is now attached to the back of the painting Wood wrote to her warmly from France: 'It is very nice to hear from you and sweet of you to want a picture to give to your friend - I am sending you the best one I have & I don't think you can fail to like it as everyone here does ... I am dying to see you again & wish you were here I feel well in your company and almost myself.' Reitlinger purchased the painting for £30.

Wood's visit to Brittany the previous year had allowed him to discover a new confidence and to work with a lyrical, authentic voice that was wholly his own. The mixture of sea and sky, Breton myth and legend and the simple life of the fishermen and villagers provided something he had found previously only in Cornwall. In the summer of 1930 he returned again after his exhibition at Bernheim-Jeune in Paris.

'This year's work is in the same spirit as last year's, he wrote to Lucy Wertheim, 'but much further on, much more composed and reflective ... sounder and subtle. I have painted a good deal of architecture, churches in a curious lonely country by the sea, very restful, but very strong and determined.'

When he arrived in Tréboul Wood was initially the only guest at the Hotel Ty-Mad, taking two rooms, one to use as a studio. He was totally absorbed in his work. In this final phase of his life he produced around forty paintings in forty days an extraordinary achievement. He was joined at the hotel by the poet Max Jacob, and they evolved a comfortable camaraderie where each worked during the day and spent their evenings together simply. Later in the trip Wood was joined by the painter Christian Bérard.

Wood burned with creative intensity at Tréboul, producing works of great originality and flair, and increasingly, depicting the mystery of religious ritual, perhaps encouraged by Jacob's interest in Catholic mysticism. Alongside this creativity was an increasingly heavy reliance on opium, and a withdrawal from it when his supplies ran out. Yet these various forces combined at Tréboul to allow him to produce art that resonates with a unique strength and vision.

After Wood's suicide Winifred Nicholson wrote: 'I consider, you know, that he practically gave his life for those pictures. He put everything he knew and every force he possessed into them and then had nothing left to do battle with his opium difficulties.' Bérard for his part believed he should have recognised the change in Wood's work as the change that happens in the work of genius painters shortly before their death.





2.

**Alfred Thomson RA 1894-1979**

*Penguin Pool* c.1934

Oil on canvas 42 x 34 inches (106.6 x 83.3 cm)  
Signed and inscribed verso

Alfred Thomson became a highly successful artist known for his subjects drawn from modern life, his chic portraits and, during the Second World War, as the official artist attached to the Royal Air Force, after Eric Kennington resigned. He was elected ARA in 1938 and a full Royal Academician in 1945.

During the 1930s Thomson was particularly known for his stylish paintings of modern subjects - a glittering 'American' cocktail bar; a capacity crowd at a boxing match in the Albert Hall; and a marvellous art deco portrayal of The Flying Scotsman, recently acquired by the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

The present painting is a unique representation of the Penguin Pool at London Zoo, designed by Berthold Lubetkin and the Tecton Group in 1934. The Penguin Pool is an icon of modernist design and had a whole section to itself in Herbert Reid's *Unit One* book. Not only was it one of the first completed structures to propose a new direction for British architecture, it was also one of the first to demonstrate the expressive and structural potential of reinforced concrete.

Thomson is represented extensively in numerous British museum collections including Tate, the Imperial War Museum, the Science Museum, the Royal Airforce Museum, Guildhall Art Gallery and Brighton Art Gallery.

Berthold Romanovich Lubetkin (1901-90) was a Soviet émigré architect who pioneered modernist design in Britain in the 1930s. Born in Georgia he studied in Berlin and Paris, before moving to London in 1931. The following year he founded the famous Tecton practice with the Architectural Association graduates Anthony Chitty, Lindsay Drake, Michael Dugdale, Valentine Harding, Godfrey Samuel, and Francis Skinner. Amongst Tecton's first commissions, led by Lubetkin, were the iconic penguin pool and gorilla house for London Zoo – both unique early examples of Modernism in Britain. Lubetkin and Tecton's buildings went on to become some of the most iconic of the period.



3.

### Stanley Spencer 1891-1959

*Piebald Pony and Beehives, Cookham* c.1910-12

Oil on card 6 x 5 inches (15.2 x 12.7 cm)

#### PROVENANCE

Given by the Artist to Richard Carline; Private Collection.

#### EXHIBITED

*Hampstead Artists*, Hampstead Town Hall, London 1960; *Sir Stanley Spencer C.B.E., R.A., 1891-1959*, City Art Gallery, Plymouth 1963 (1); *Spencers and Carlines in Hampstead in the 1920s*, The Odney Club, Cookham, 1973.

#### LITERATURE

Keith Bell, *Stanley Spencer: A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings*, Oxford 1992 no.5.

This is one of Spencer's earliest paintings in oils, a medium that he taught himself how to use. Spencer evolved a sense of immediacy and transcendent intensity in these early paintings. They invariably represented his home village of Cookham – from which he commuted to the Slade every day – and the feelings of connection that it evoked in him. Later he was to describe it as 'A Heaven on Earth'. The piebald pony grazed in a field adjacent to a spot featured in another early painting by Spencer, *Two Girls and a Beehive* (c.1910) which, he wrote, depicted 'more or less the fields on the right at the bottom of Mill Lane' in Cookham.

Spencer's intense, visionary connection to Cookham did not however make him isolated from avant-garde developments in the London art world. Spencer attended the lectures given by Roger Fry at the Slade from 1909, and it is almost certain that he saw the exhibition of modern French painting *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* that Fry staged at the Grafton Gallery in November 1910. Indeed for his second exhibition of advanced art, staged two years later, Fry selected Spencer's *John Donne* arriving in Heaven to exhibit. In *The Piebald Pony* Spencer places the paint with a slightly fuzzy-edged touch that is somewhat reminiscent of works by Cézanne that Fry included in 1910 such as *The Viaduct at L'Estaque* (c.1883) or, perhaps more strongly, the pictures of Maurice Dennis (1870-1943), such as *Ulysses and Calypso* (1905). Spencer's attention to Dennis, not least the other artist's own transcendent subject-matter, was noted by Tonks in connection with his picture in the second Post-Impressionist exhibition, albeit a comment Spencer greeted with outrage as he always saw his own work as wholly original. Spencer merged this plethora of influences into a distinctive, individual style, and in a letter to the Spencer family his tutor Henry Tonks wrote: 'In some ways he has shown signs of having the most original mind of anyone we have had at the Slade and he combines this with great powers of draughtsmanship' (quoted in Maurice Collins, *Stanley Spencer: A Biography*, London 1962, p.39).





4.

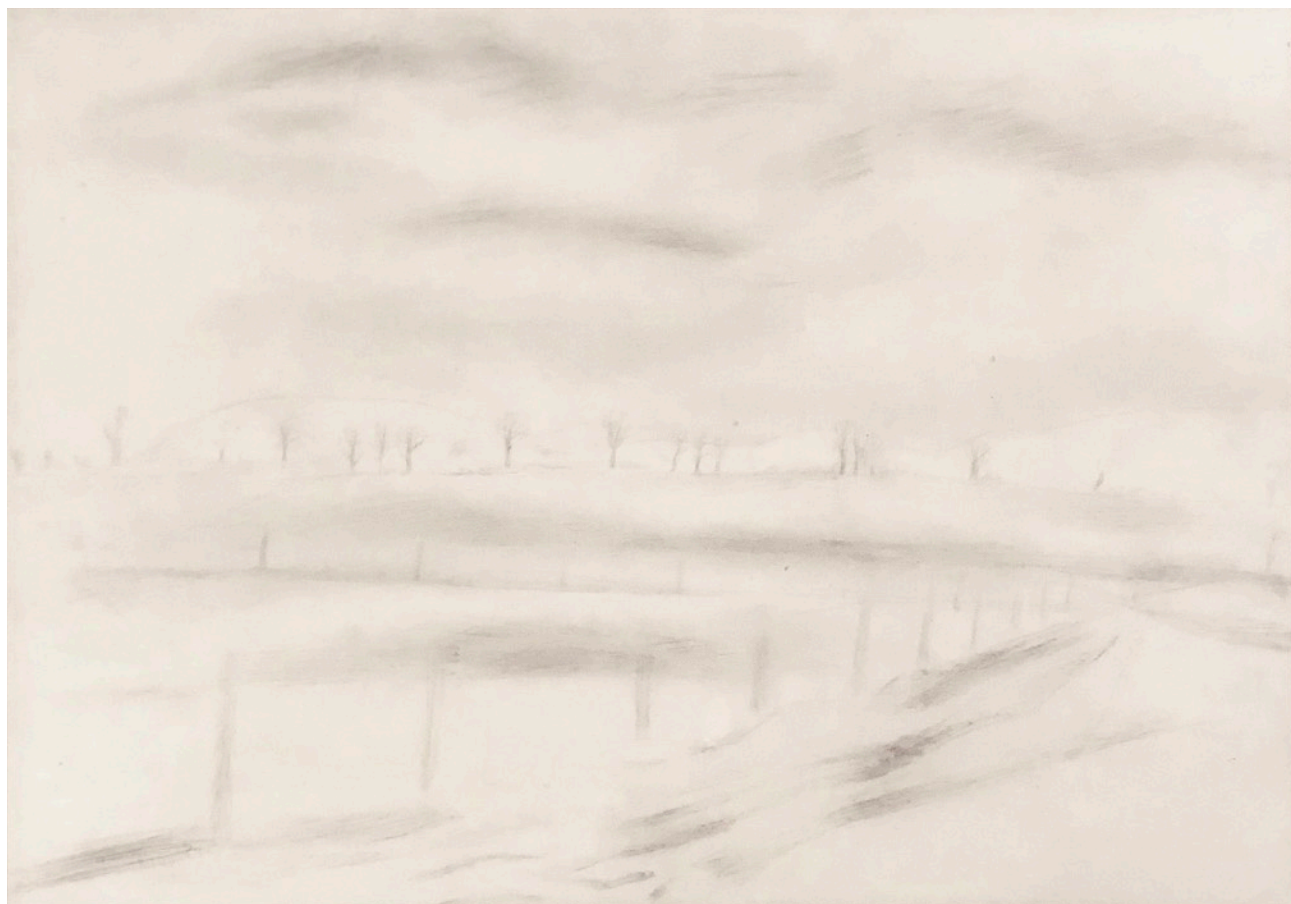
**Henry Moore 1898-1986**

*Maquette for Two Piece Reclining Figure: Cut 1978*

Bronze 5 5/16 x 8 1/4 inches (13.5 x 21 cm)  
Edition of 9

PROVENANCE  
Private Collection.

LITERATURE  
LH No.755.



5.

**Ben Nicholson 1894-1982**

*Cumberland Landscape - Early Morning 1925*

Pencil 14 x 20 inches (36 x 51 cm)





6.

**John Armstrong 1893-1973**

*Madonna* 1945

Tempera on board 30 x 30 inches (76.2 x 76.2 cm)  
Signed with initials and dated b.r.

**PROVENANCE**

Lord and Lady Strauss.

**EXHIBITED**

*Painters Progress*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1950 (44).

**LITERATURE**

Andrew Lambirth, Annette Armstrong & Jonathan Gibbs, *John Armstrong: The Paintings*, London 2009 no.309 repr. col.



7.

**Harold Gilman 1876-1919**

*Hampstead Road B.D.V. c.1911*

Oil on canvas 10 x 12 inches (25.4 x 30.5 cm)

**PROVENANCE:**

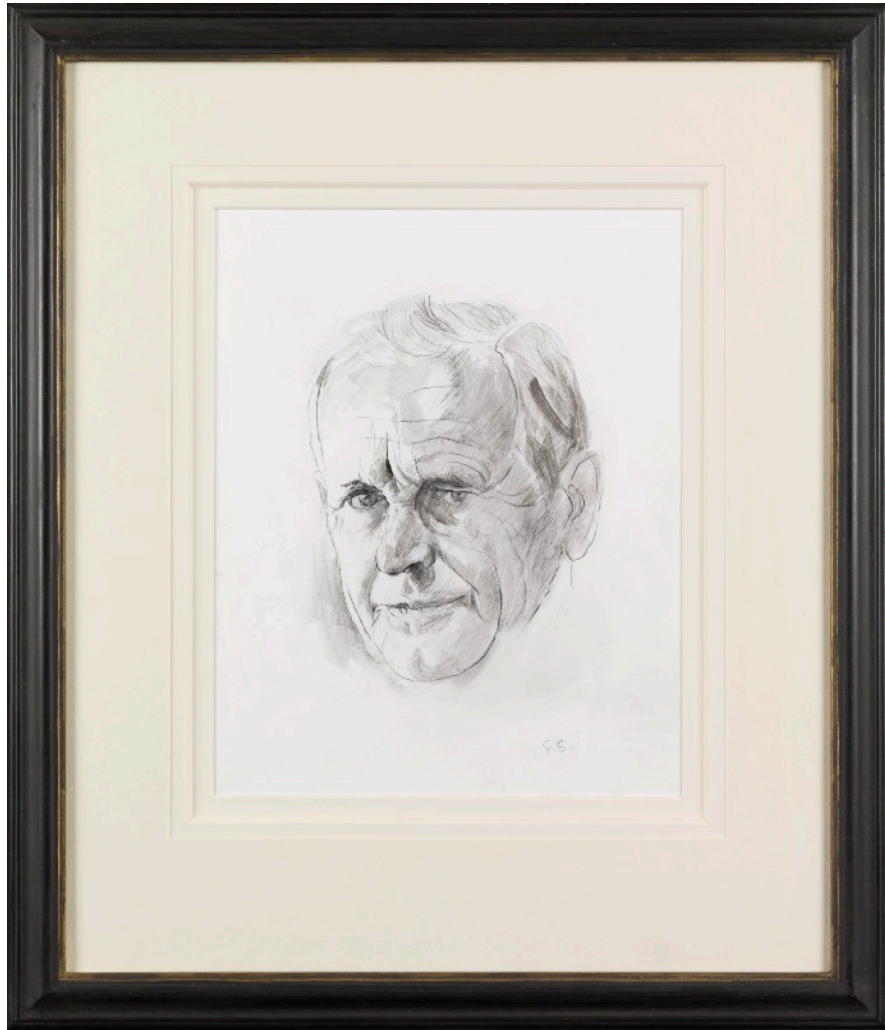
The Artist's Family; The Fine Art Society; Private Collection.

**EXHIBITED:**

*Camden Town Recalled*, The Fine Art Society, London, October-November 1976 (29); *Harold Gilman: Beyond Camden Town*, Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham, November 2018-February 2019, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester 2019.

The Camden Town Group took their name from the run down area of London that several of them lived in, and they took as their subject matter the everyday life of the city. Sickert had his studio in Rowlandson House in Mornington Crescent at this period and Gilman has crossed Hampstead Road to look back on the terraced row that included it. It is the second house along from the blank wall terminating the block. The composition is dominated by the large advertising bill board on the end of the terrace which would have been visible from the railway cutting below in which trains ran in and out of Euston station. The letters B.D.V. stood for British Dark Virginia, a popular brand of cigarette. In one small composition Gilman deftly combines the urban experience, advertising and consumption with the pioneering role of a group of contemporary artists in depicting modern life.

Gilman was among the principal colourists of the Camden Town Group, and while the delicate dabs of colour demonstrate the influence of Sickert on Gilman's art it perhaps more importantly displays that of French fauve painters such as André Derain.



8.

**Graham Sutherland 1903-1980**

*Self Portrait 1977*

Pencil, pen and ink and watercolour

11 x 8 ¾ inches (27.9 x 22.2 cm)

Signed with initials

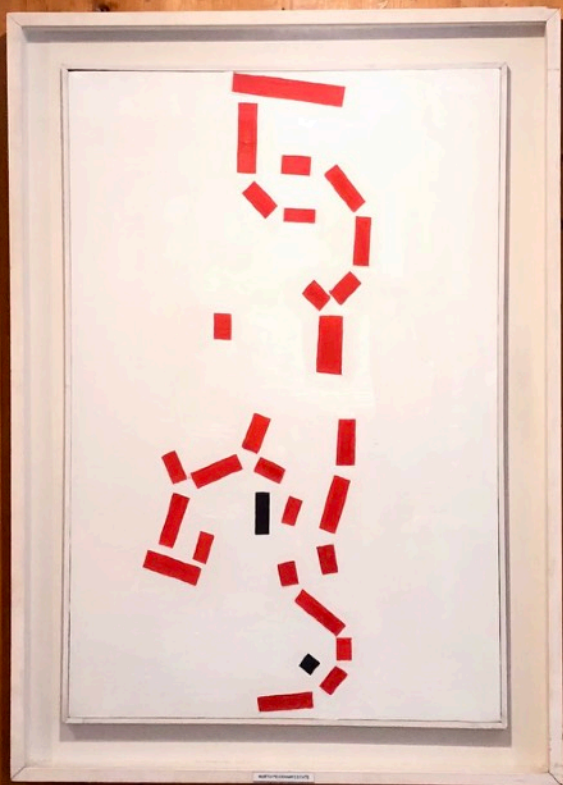
**PROVENANCE:**

Bernard Jacobson Gallery; Private Collection.

**LITERATURE:**

Ronald Alley, *Graham Sutherland*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery 1982 p.147.

When Sutherland was given his first great retrospective at the National Portrait Gallery in 1977 he decided to include a self portrait painted specially, the first that he had ever made (other than *Study for Self-Portrait at a Casino of 1952*). Sutherland said that in it he tried to express the anxiety he felt when he faced a subject for the first time. This work on paper is his first exploration of himself as a subject, burning with intense self scrutiny. It formed the basis for the portrait completed in oils that is now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, but it is not really a study. It is a complete work in itself, and possesses an even greater depth of feeling and immediacy than the oil version.



**Keith Coventry** b.1958*North Peckham Estate* 1992

Oil on canvas, wood and glass 42 ¼ x 30 ⅜ inches (107.3 x 77.4 cm)

## PROVENANCE

Karsten Schubert; Private Collection.

## EXHIBITED

*Keith Coventry: Ivory Tower*, Karsten Schubert, London, 30 April-30 May 1992.

Keith Coventry shot to fame with his Estate paintings, and this is an important early example that was among the first that he made. At first sight the Estate Paintings appear to be pure abstracts in the style of 'Suprematist' abstract modernist painters such as Malevich and Rodchenko. Their frames, which are part of the work and made by the Artist, are copies of the frames Mondrian designed and used. However, the apparently abstract designs are actually copies of the maps found outside post-War public housing projects. Coventry is in some ways a history painter, and these works address the tension between Modernist aesthetics and idealist social ideologies and the reality of - in this case - the North Peckham Estate, a vast and alienating archipelago of tower blocks.

In an interview Coventry explained: 'I'm interested really in looking at aspects of art history and grafting on to them some kind of social issue, so that the two seem to make a comment upon the other. I've looked at the Russian Constructivists – Malevich and so on – and how they tried to create a world that was pure through their work, but they actually failed at doing that. They set up a kind of revolution in terms of ideas about mass housing, and that led to the sort of social problems that we have now through the construction of those schemes'.

Coventry was at the heart of the YBA group of artists in the early late 1980s and 1990s. He was also with Paul Noble curator of City Racing, a disused Kennington betting shop in which they held exhibitions of their work from 1988-98 as well as important shows by Gillian Wearing and Sarah Lucas. Tate holds the City Racing archive, and in 2006 purchased a group of Coventry's Estate Paintings.





10.

**Cecil Collins 1908-1989**

*Head of a Fool* 1965

Oil on board 10 ½ x 5 ¾ inches (26.5 x 14.5 cm)

Signed, titled and dated verso

**EXHIBITED**

*Cecil Collins: Recent Paintings*, Arthur Tooth & Sons, London, February-March 1965



11.

**Cecil Collins 1908-1989**

*Dancing Girl* 1965

Oil on board 10 ½ x 5 ½ inches (27 x 14 cm)

Signed, titled and dated verso

**EXHIBITED**

*Cecil Collins: Recent Paintings*, Arthur Tooth & Sons, London, February-March 1965



12.

**Cecil Collins 1908-1989**

*A Young Girl* 1965

Oil on board 10 ½ x 5 ½ inches (27 x 14 cm)

Signed, dated and titled verso

**EXHIBITED**

*Cecil Collins: Recent Paintings*, Arthur Tooth & Sons, London, February-March 1965



13.

**Cecil Collins 1908-1989**

*Fool and Angels* 1969

Oil on board 8  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches (22 x 17 cm)

Signed and dated b.l. and verso







14.

**Duncan Grant 1885-1978**

*Joseph being disrobed by the Servants of Potiphar's Wife*

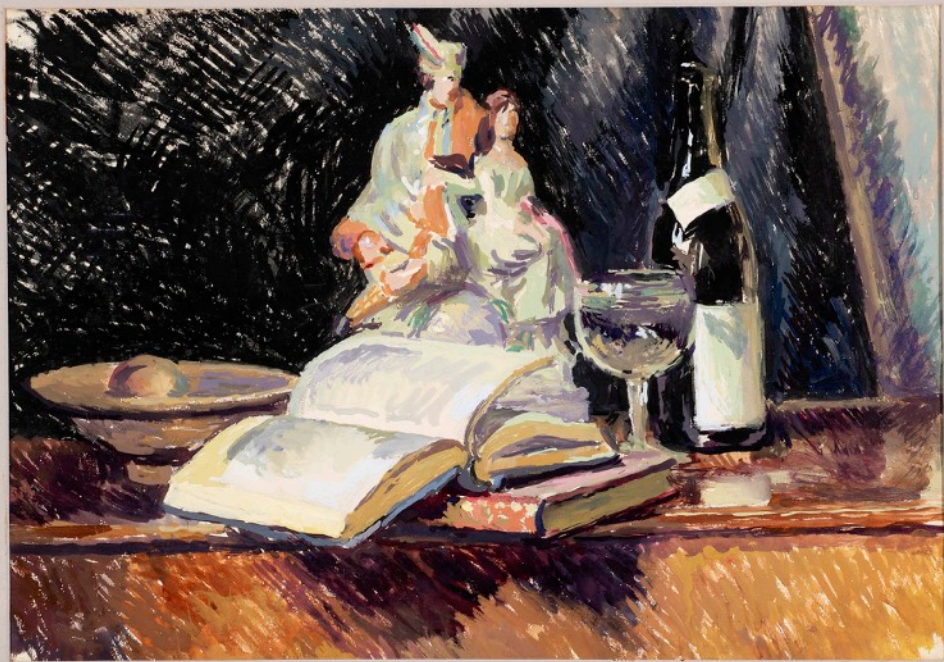
Oil on panel 25 ½ x 35 inches (64.7 x 90 cm)

Signed verso

Grant has taken as his subject the incident from the story in *Genesis* in which the wife of Pharaoh's Captain, Potiphar, seeks to seduce the young Joseph. When he rebuffs her and flees she gives false testimony against him which puts him in prison. But ultimately it brings him to Pharaoh's attention and thus leads both to his own success and the deliverance of Egypt.

Grant has created an erotically charged visualisation of beginning of this incident. Like an odalisque, Potiphar's wife surveys languidly her servants taking off Joseph's coat of many colours. For the figure of Joseph, Grant has added a level of self-personification. The head and raised arm are derived from his self-portrait *Study for Composition (Man in a Turban)* made around 1910 (below).





15.

**Duncan Grant 1885-1978**

*Still Life with Staffordshire Figure and Wine Bottle* c.1940

Gouache 15 x 21 ½ inches (38.1 x 54.6 cm)

This picture relates to a version Grant painted in oils that is at Charleston (see below). However, the present work is much more dynamic, brushing on strokes of gouache in a much more lively, vibrant handling that brings to life the objects Grant has gathered on the sideboard in the dining room at Charleston.

Painted during the War in time of ration gives the objects Grant depicts an enhanced sense of significance and meaning - the enjoyment of wine which was becoming ever more difficult to obtain, the simple pleasures of reading at Charleston, the bowl of fruit, and the sentimentality of a Staffordshire figurine couple.







16.

**James Dickson Innes 1887-1914**

*The Rock Pool* 1911

Oil on panel 9 ½ x 12 ¾ inches (24.2 x 32.5 cm)

Signed and dated l.r.

**PROVENANCE**

Horace de Vere Cole; Christie's, London, 3 March 1989 (318); Claire and Garrick Stephenson;  
Private Collection.





17.

**Augustus John 1878-1961**

*Dorelia Sewing on a Clifftop* c.1910

Oil on panel 9 ¼ x 13 inches (23.2 x 33 cm)



18.

**Augustus John 1878-1961**

*Study for a Mural* c.1907

Pencil 13 x 19  $\frac{1}{3}$  inches (33.5 x 49 cm)

This large allegorical composition is closely related to a drawing in the National Museum of Wales that Augustus John made for Lady Gregory. John had already met Lady Gregory in London in 1904, and then stayed at her house in Ireland in 1907, after receiving a commission to make an etched portrait of W.B. Yeats, who was then also staying with his patron.

John has created a complex allegory that appears to illustrate the passage from youth to death - the beautiful young woman at the centre appears to be torn between two figures who each beckon her towards them. One is a naked youth who wants to take her towards the boat captained by a figure of death; the other, a clothed woman, seems to point towards the alternative of child-bearing and eventual old age. The treatment of the boat is derived from Puvis de Chavannes' famous Symbolist painting *The Poor Fisherman* (1881), which when John made this was in the Musée de Luxembourg.

Isabella, Lady Gregory (1852-1932) was an Irish dramatist and writer. She was one of the principal founders of the Abbey Theatre that played a central part in the Irish cultural renaissance in the decade running up to the Easter Rising of 1916.



AUGUSTUS JOHN  
1874-1961  
HEADS OF CHILDREN

19.

**Augustus John 1878-1961**

*Studies of a Young Girl* c.1899

Red and black chalks heightened with white on grey paper 13 x 19  $\frac{1}{3}$  inches (16.5 x 21 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

With Thomas Agnew & Sons 1947, when bought by Murroe Fitzgerald (1895-1967); his sale, Christie's, London, 22 March 1966 (Lot 141; 25 guineas); Private Collection.



20.

**Augustus John 1878-1961**

*Wyndham Lewis* c.1912

Red chalk  $6 \frac{7}{8} \times 4 \frac{3}{4}$  inches (17.5 x 12 cm)





21.

**Augustus John 1878-1961**

*Dorelia wearing a Hat* c.1912

Red chalk  $6 \frac{7}{8} \times 4 \frac{3}{4}$  inches (17.5 x 12 cm)





22.

**Henry Lamb 1883-1960**

*Scabious* 1929

Oil on panel 20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)  
Signed and dated b.r.

**PROVENANCE**

Private Collection.

**EXHIBITED**

London, The Leicester Galleries, *An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Henry Lamb*,  
November 1929 (47).

Lamb painted this while he was staying with Lady Ottoline Morrell at Garsington Manor and it was included in his exhibition at The Leicester Galleries.

It is a quintessentially Bloomsbury painting, the succulent colours arranged in a Post-Impressionist style, and the dabs of soft mauve and pink on the table cloth creating a satisfying decorative rhythm.



23.

**David Nash** b.1945

*Stack Frame* c.1998

Oak 14 x 14 x 10 inches (35.5 x 35.5 x 25 cm)







24.

**Paul Nash 1889-1946**

*The Garden of Cyrus - The Quincunx Artificially Considered* 1931-2

Pencil and watercolour 8 ¼ x 6 inches (21 x 15 cm)

**PROVENANCE**

Purchased at The Redfern Gallery by Richard Smart Esq; Private Collection.

**EXHIBITED**

?*Watercolour Drawings by Paul Nash*, The Leicester Galleries, London, November, 1932;  
*Watercolours and Drawings by Paul Nash*, Frank Dobson, P.H. Jowett, Adrian Allinson, and Isabel Nicholas, The Redfern Gallery, London, February 1934.

**LITERATURE**

Andrew Causey, *Paul Nash*, Oxford 1980 pp. 221-34; Anthony Bertram, *Paul Nash: The Portrait of an Artist*, London 1955 pp. 198-9; Andrew Causey, *Paul Nash: Landscape and the Life of Objects*, Farnham 2013 pp. 86-97.

This recently rediscovered work is a rare original watercolour for one of Paul Nash's full-page illustrations for *Urne Buriall and the Garden of Cyrus*. In 1930 the Curwen Press approached Nash to illustrate a book of his own choosing. Nash selected the strange and idiosyncratic alchemical writings *Hydriotaphia, or Urne Buriall* and *The Garden of Cyrus* by Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82). These twinned treatises had first been published together in 1658. The project became Paul Nash's magnum opus of 1930-1932. Herbert Read described Nash's illustrations as 'one of the loveliest achievements of contemporary English art.'

Nash's interpretation of Browne's text combines mystical concepts with visual observations of geometry in nature. Here the wall and the waves of 'The Quincunx Naturally Considered' are reminiscent of Nash's earlier Dymchurch work but they now take on a more dreamlike feeling. The ball-like sun/moon in the sky forms another connection between Nash's earlier and later work. In his watercolour Nash makes numerous allusions to the original text - he uses the quincunx in the latticed window of the ruined building; in the shadow it casts upon the floor; in the wicker baskets and nets; on the tiled floor and also in the reflection of the sun/moon in the waves.

The bust also suggests an affinity between Nash's work and the early Metaphysical Paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio and Carlo Carrà (de Chirico, had held his first London exhibition at Arthur Tooth & Sons in October 1928)

In 1933, in the light of the work he had undertaken on *Urne-Buriall and The Garden of Cyrus*, Nash visited Silbury Hill and Avebury for the first time. The ideas he had whilst occupying himself with Browne's mystical writings combined with this trip to ancient Wiltshire sites to provide the seminal inspiration for a new period of artistic output. Geometry and the quincunx resonate throughout his subsequent work: in the 1935 painting *Equivalents for the Megaliths* (Tate, below) a landscape of ancient earthworkings is juxtaposed with a series of abstract forms. A conventional perspective, enhanced by Nash's observation of the man-made criss-cross patterns within the field of stubble, is set against a white upright grid. The circular face of the principal object on the right hand side of the composition is marked prominently with a red quincunx.

Richard 'Dick' Smart, the first owner this watercolour, was a director of Arthur Tooth & Sons. He represented a number of highly regarded contemporary British artists and, in due course, became Paul Nash's agent. He acquired a number of important works by the artist. After Nash's death, Dick Smart was a crucial correspondent with his widow, Margaret Nash, and helped her with the handling of the artist's estate.





25.

**Samuel John Peploe (1871-1935)**

*Still Life* c.1930

Oil on canvas 20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

Signed b.r.

**PROVENANCE**

Willie Peploe, the Artist's Son, and thence by descent.

The work of Peploe covers a wide range of genres, but he is best known for his experimentation with still life, a subject to which he returned again and again. Peploe approached still life in an intellectual and almost scientific way, always trying to depict the perfect example, a pursuit that dominated his career. He was always very meticulous in the construction of his composition, spending not hours but days setting up the objects and rearranging them over and over again until he was certain that the balance of colour and form was good enough for the picture to be painted. His aim was to achieve perfect harmony between the arrangement of forms, something which was essentially a Modernist concept. His devotion to painting the perfect still life transformed the genre to a status that defined not only his own work, but the entirety of Scottish modernism.

Peploe's earliest still lifes were painted in smoothly modulated dark tones, with a strong chiaroscuro that evidently derived from Manet, and to a lesser extent the paintings of Velasquez. His exposure to the Fauves led Peploe to an explosion of jazzy and jarring primary colours in his paintings made around 1912-14. But after the end of the 1920s when the present painting was made, Peploe had evolved and shifted yet again to discover a new equilibrium and poise. The juxtaposition of soft pinks and greys, ochres and turquoise offer a lyrical harmony that is joyful yet calm. This palette is resonant of works by his peers such as Picasso, Braque, and Morandi. Their reversion to naturalism can be seen as a retreat from the avant-garde experimentation of the first two decades of the century.



26.

**Maxwell Armfield 1881-1972**

*Still Life: Gifts* c.1930

Tempera on gessoed board 7 ½ x 11 ¼ inches (19 x 28.5 cm)

Signed and titled on the reverse

EXHIBITED

Bournemouth 1954; *Maxwell Armfield 1881-1972: Retrospective Exhibition*, Southampton Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, The Fun Art Society, London, 1978.





27.

**David Tindle** b. 1932

*Moon Pack* 2000

Tempera on panel 6 ½ x 4 ½ inches (16.5 x 11.5 cm)



28.

**Simon Palmer** b. 1956

*The Plantation* 1995

Watercolour, gouache and ink 21 x 27 inches (53.3 x 68.5 cm)



29.

**Simon Palmer** b. 1953

*The Pedestrian Tax* 1989

Watercolour, gouache and ink 19 ¼ x 13 inches (48.9 x 33 cm)





UPSTONE

ROBERTUPSTONE.COM