



Vanessa Bell in a Deckchair by Roger Fry. Estimate: £15,000-25,000. Photo: Bonhams.

LONDON.- The art historian and critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) occupied a central role in British cultural life during the first four decades of the 20th century. A key figure in the influential Bloomsbury Group of writers, artists and freethinkers, and a founding member of both *The Burlington Magazine* and the Omega Workshops which gave practical expression to the Group's design aesthetics, Fry is, however, perhaps best remembered for organising the Manet and the Post-Impressionists exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in London in 1910. The exhibition not only introduced the work of painters such as Gauguin, Van Gogh, Cézanne and Matisse to the British public, it also gave the world a new word – Post-Impressionism, which has been a standard art history concept for more than a century. Roger Fry was himself a painter, and his *Vanessa Bell in a Deckchair* is one of the star pictures in [Bonhams](#) Modern British and Irish Art sale in London on Wednesday 30 June. It is estimated at £15,000-25,000.

The work was painted in 1911 either at Fry's house Durbins near Guildford or at a nearby rented house called Millmead Cottage; Bell was dividing her time between the two properties while recuperating from a bout of serious illness. Around this period Fry and Bell began an affair which lasted until 1913, when Bell decided to set up home with the predominately gay painter Duncan Grant, by whom she subsequently had a child, Angelica. (Life in the Bloomsbury Group being what it was, Angelica in later life married the much older novelist David Garnett – a former lover of her father's). The end of the affair with Bell caused Fry much distress although they remained friends for the rest of his life.

Bonhams Director of Modern British and Irish Art, Chris Dawson, said: “Although Roger Fry regarded painting and art historian, he was, in fact, a fine artist and his works now command considerable attention. In July last year, for example, Bonhams set an auction world record for a work by Fry when Portrait of E. M. Forster sold for £325,000. Fry executed Vanessa Bell in a Deckchair as he was nursing Bell through her illness. His charming portrait of the invalid Vanessa perfectly captures the tender feelings of a man on the very cusp of falling in love.”

Other paintings by Fry in the sale include The Walled Garden, Charleston painted in 1919-20 at Bell’s home in the Sussex countryside which she bought in 1916 and shared with Grant – and for a while with Garnett. It was also where her husband Clive Bell (who brought up Angelica as his own child) had a study. Charleston became a home from home for The Bloomsbury Group and, as noted by Bell’s granddaughter Virginia Nicholson writing in the summer edition of Bonhams Magazine, Roger Fry played a major part in turning the house into the distinctive home it was to become. In her words: “At Charleston, his imprint is everywhere. It’s sometimes forgotten, but the truth is that Charleston wouldn’t be Charleston without Roger Fry.”

The sale also features paintings by other members of The Bloomsbury Group including:

- Cornish Cottages by Duncan Grant (1885-1978) Estimate: £30,000-50,000.
- Landscape at St Tropez by Vanessa Bell (1879-1961). Estimate: £15,000-25,000.
- Seated Male Nude by Duncan Grant. Estimate: £12,000-18,000.