



# ΩMEGA LIVES

*The Omega Workshops & the Hogarth Press*

Chapin Library • Williams College

October - December 2007

THIS SHOW focuses on two idiosyncratic enterprises that began in London in the second decade of the twentieth century, and concerned members of the “Bloomsbury” group of writers and artists. The OMEGA WORKSHOPS, founded by Roger Fry in 1913, lasted only six years; while the HOGARTH PRESS, begun by Leonard and Virginia Woolf in 1917, lived close to the edge for its first years, and even after becoming established, inspired despair in its founders as often as it did elation. Both the Omega and the Press were small and at times amateurish, but both left lasting marks on the English cultural landscape. They did so in good part because of a remarkable synergy of principle, practice, and people that embodied Bloomsbury at its best. Roger Fry may have founded the Workshops, the Woolfs the Press, but both initiatives relied from the beginning on the contributions of that small but irrepressibly energetic group that also included Vanessa and Clive Bell, Duncan Grant, John Maynard Keynes, and Lytton Strachey, along with “Bloomsbury outliers” such as Dora Carrington and E.M. Forster.

There was also the synergy of the two enterprises themselves. During the brief time during which they coexisted, the interplay between them was lively, even contrapuntal; and even after 1919, when Omega closed its doors, the Press constantly drew on Omega ideas and Omega artists. The ambiguity of this show’s title, “Omega Lives,” is deliberate: in the work of the Hogarth Press, the spirit of Omega *lives* long past the close of the Workshops in 1919; in addition, the *lives* of Omega artists such as Fry, Bell, Grant, Carrington, and McKnight Kauffer, some of whom outlived both Woolfs, were essential not only to the founding of the Press but also to its subsequent history.

In 1910 and 1912 Roger Fry mounted two exhibitions at the Grafton Gallery in London with the goal of introducing the English public to the artistic breakthroughs that were occurring elsewhere in the world, and especially in France. The First Post-Impressionist Exhibition focused on the work of Manet, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Cézanne, the Second on Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso. Both shows evoked derision and outcry, but their very notoriety accomplished Fry’s goal: the public flocked to them, and what Virginia Woolf described as the paintings’ “astonishing power to enrage” ensured that this same public could never again ignore the artists who had created these works. In addition, these new movements were already influencing the work of British artists such as Grant, Bell, and Fry, as was apparent from those works of theirs that Fry included in the 1912 show alongside those of their French colleagues.

Roger Fry’s French connections fed also into another project that he was already planning by the time of the 1912 Exhibition: the Omega Workshops. Among his French friends were the couturier Paul Poulet, who had helped a group of working-class women learn to design home furnishings, and the painter and poet Charles Vildrac, who in 1906–7 had been a member of an artists’ collective, both of which ventures pointed the way toward what Fry would attempt in the Omega. There was also Ambroise Vollard, a French art dealer who, like Vildrac, had become a book publisher, and one with a special interest in matching literary texts with illustrations – again an exemplar for Fry’s efforts at the Omega. Fry had also become fascinated by the degree to which pure design had replaced representation in the work of the Post-Impressionist French artists, and with the way in which this focus encouraged crossovers from “pure art” into decorative design and home décor – and hence into the everyday lives of the public.

In planning and mounting the two Post-Impressionist shows, Fry worked closely with other English artists who shared his enthusiasm for what was happening in France, and in 1911, in the interim between these two shows, he teamed up with several of these colleagues to create a set of murals for the dining hall of a London school, the Borough Polytechnic at Elephant and Castle. The murals, now in London’s Tate Britain, clearly show the impact of their creators’ exposure to the art of contemporary France, while the project itself – the collaborative creation of murals for a public space – foreshadows the cooperative efforts all of them would soon be undertaking for the Omega Workshops.

The modest fees paid for their work on the Polytechnic project also brought home to Fry just how difficult it was for artists, especially those not yet established, to support themselves, and his wish to ameliorate this situation helped motivate the founding of the Omega Workshops, as Fry explained in a 1912 letter to George Bernard Shaw: “I am intending to start a workshop for decorative and applied art. I find that there are many young artists whose painting shows strong decorative feeling, who will be glad to use their talents on applied art both as a means of livelihood and as an advantage to their work as painters and sculptors.” The financial model Fry developed, which was supported by a modest endowment raised from donors such as Shaw, Clive and Vanessa Bell, and Fry himself, was simple but ingenious. Each of the artist members, whether famous or not, would spend three half-days per week at the Workshops designing and executing objects – furniture, ceramics, fabrics, wallpaper, etc. In return for their labors, contributed on an anonymous basis,

each artist would receive thirty shillings per week, a significant step toward a living wage. The objects created by them and from their designs would be sold at an affordable cost, with the result that the imaginative force of their art would enter into the lives of the public through objects purchased and then used on a daily basis (Quentin Bell wryly described the goal as that of “supplying first aid to the terrible railway accident of Victorian decoration”!). The Workshops officially opened in June 1913, with Fry, Bell, and Grant listed as co-directors. Over the next six years, a period that included the unforeseen challenges of World War I, Omega somehow survived. By 1919, however, Roger Fry realized that financial pressures had reached the breaking point, and the Workshops closed their doors at 33 Fitzroy Square in July of that year.

The current exhibition includes a number of Omega creations: tiles fashioned by Vanessa Bell, hat designs drawn by Duncan Grant, all four of the books that Omega published. In another sense, however, Omega is on display throughout this show, for the Hogarth Press grew out the model of Omega, and Omega artists and designs remained very much in evidence throughout the history of the Press.

In March 1917 Leonard and Virginia Woolf, walking on London’s Farringdon Street, saw in a shop window a hand press for sale, with printing instructions included. They returned on a subsequent day and for about twenty pounds purchased the press and a supply of type, set up operations in the dining room of their Richmond home, Hogarth House (hence the Press’s name), and at once began to teach themselves how to print. Within three months they had printed and were selling their first book, *Two Stories* (no. 5). While, as this account suggests, there was an element of spontaneity in the founding of the Press, the Woolfs had in fact been contemplating such a step for some time – with Omega very much in their minds. Given their close connections to Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, and Duncan Grant, from the start the Woolfs were aware of the Workshops, and Virginia made frequent purchases there. In December 1912, as the Second Post-Impressionist show entered its last days, Virginia told a friend that Roger was “now turning [his artist colleagues] upon chairs and tables,” and in May 1913, even before Omega officially opened its doors, Virginia wrote to a friend: “They are beginning to paint boxes and arm chairs in Fitzroy Sqre.” When Omega turned to publishing in 1915, Roger Fry consulted with Virginia about the translations he had made of the French poems of P.J. Jouve (no. 4), and well before the Woolfs purchased their own press, Virginia wrote to Fry asking if they might use his list of Omega

Workshop subscribers to help solicit customers for their own future publishing efforts. Most obviously, the entrepreneurial daring of the Omega Workshops, and the fact that its artists were turning their hands to producing furniture and rugs and pottery, provided the model for the Woolfs’ new enterprise, in which two writers took on the daunting task of teaching themselves to be printers and publishers.

The early years of the Hogarth Press were as fraught with challenge as those of the Omega Workshops, with the nine-month epic of printing Katherine Mansfield’s *Prelude* (no. 7) in 1917–18 bringing home to the Woolfs the full magnitude of what they had taken on. But whereas in 1919 the Omega Workshops finally closed their doors, in that same year the Hogarth Press suddenly took on new life with the critical acclaim accorded Virginia’s *Kew Gardens* (no. 9), and its success led to a rapid expansion of the Woolfs’ efforts in the years to come, and to an increased reliance on professional printers for the actual production of their books. The numbers document their ever-accelerating level of activity: whereas from 1917 through 1920 they produced a total of eleven books, in 1921 they published six, in 1922 nine, and in 1923 fourteen; by 1925 they were publishing at least twenty-five books each year, many of them far more substantial in scope than they would have dreamed of in the early days.

By the time of Virginia’s death in 1941, the Press had become a major force in English publishing. Among its more significant contributions were numerous translations of works by Russian authors such as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gorky, and Andreev; extensive series such as the Hogarth Essays, Hogarth Living Poets, and Hogarth Day to Day Pamphlets (see nos. 26–29 and 31–32); major works by authors such as Christopher Isherwood, Ivan Bunin, and Iris Origo; and virtually all of Virginia’s own writing from 1922 on. One of their most important projects was the publication, in conjunction with The International Psycho-Analytical Library, of the first English translation of the works of Freud, a project expanded to include other major twentieth century psychological texts as well.

As the objects in the show make very apparent, throughout its history the Hogarth Press drew upon and interacted with Omega. It is hard to imagine the Woolfs, for all their daring, founding the Press without the backdrop of Fry’s Omega venture; the Woolfs’ focus on publishing translations of important European texts – Russian writers, Freud, etc. – takes its cue from Fry’s interest in the same area (cf. the Omega’s second and third books, nos. 4 and 6; the books published by the Press in its first decade constantly turn to Omega artists

– Fry, Grant, Bell, Carrington – for their designs and illustrations; and when in the 1930s the Woolfs begin to publish the young writers of that era – Auden, Isherwood, Day Lewis – the appearance of their books also changes, but again it is an Omega artist, E. McKnight Kauffer, who not only designs several jackets but also provides a new version of the wolf’s head Hogarth Press device. Vanessa Bell’s original design for this device remains in use on many Hogarth Press books, however, and Vanessa herself continues to design jackets for the Press long after Leonard Woolf sells out his share in 1946 – jackets that persistently reveal their roots in Omega (see no. 36). “Omega lives” even today in the Bloomsbury Heritage series, which Cecil Woolf, Leonard Woolf’s nephew, publishes in London as a quite conscious reincarnation of the Hogarth Essays – and with a series cover inspired by Vanessa Bell, and by Omega.

Emblematic of the way Omega survives in the Hogarth Press is the persistence of the Omega logo, a capital Greek o-mega (Ω) – “large O”: W. This logo appeared in numerous forms during the life of the Workshops: in the large sign that Duncan Grant created to hang outside 33 Fitzroy Square (fig. 1 below); in the four Omega books – the flattened omegas that Kristian and Fry designed for *Simpson’s Choice* and *Lucretius on Death* (figs. 2–3), Fry’s more complex design for *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (fig. 4), Kristian’s contorted but still recognizable omega for the headpiece

of *Men of Europe* (fig. 5); in the potter’s mark painted or impressed on Omega pottery (fig. 6); and in the ad Duncan Grant designed for an Omega Exhibition (fig. 7). Though omegas as such do not appear in Hogarth Press graphics, again and again such graphics are built around large O’s – the central O of Vanessa Bell’s covers for Woolf’s *Monday or Tuesday* (no. 14 in this show) and for the Uniform Edition of Woolf’s works (fig. 8), or the double O’s that provide the focus for Grant’s design of a 1924 Hogarth Press book about himself (no. 24) and for Vanessa Bell’s design of a 1956 book of letters between Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey (no. 36); and behind yet other graphics one feels the strong presence of Grant’s iconic Omega Workshops sign. Though the link may be unintentional, it is also supremely appropriate that Vanessa Bell’s version of the Hogarth Press device shows a wolf’s head enclosed by an O (fig. 9) – the Press within O-mega!

My thanks to the following, all of whom have helped me find Omega and Hogarth Press items, have taught me a great deal, and have in the process directly contributed to the present show: Tony Bradshaw, Rick Gekoski, Tom Goldwasser, Peter Grogan, Glenn Horowitz, Jeffrey Marks, and Jon Richardson. Finally, without the knowledge, skill, hard work, and generosity of Wayne Hammond, this exhibit would not have been possible.

DAVID H. PORTER

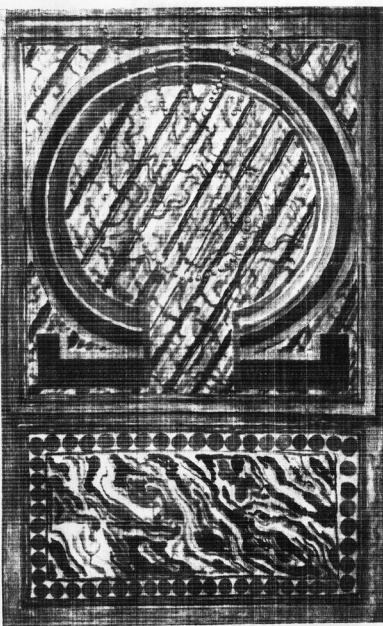


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

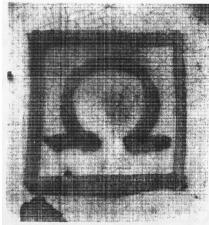


Fig. 6

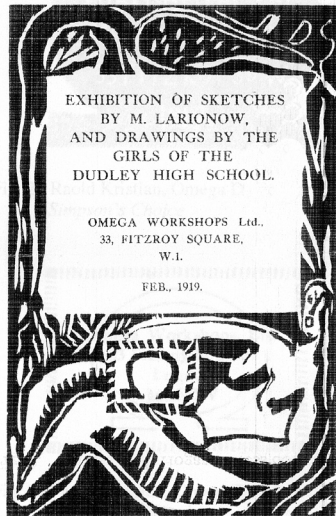


Fig. 7

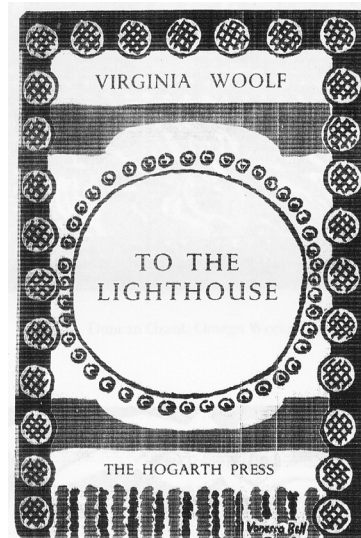


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

## CATALOGUE

*Unless stated otherwise, all items are first editions and from the collection of David H. Porter, Harry C. Payne Visiting Professor of Visual Arts at Williams College, who also composed the notes. The exhibition and handlist were designed by Wayne G. Hammond, Assistant Chapin Librarian.*

1

### **Vanessa Bell, 1879–1961**

Ceramic tiles (for a table top?)

c. 1925

Although Vanessa Bell probably made these tiles a few years after the close of the Omega in 1919, they grew out of work she had done for the Workshops: compare a tiled fireplace surround that she created for Virginia and Leonard Woolf's country home, or a tiled table by Duncan Grant for the same home. As will be readily apparent from this show, the cross-hatching and floral elements that appear on these Omega-style tiles carry over to many of the covers and jackets that Bell created for the Hogarth Press.

These tiles come from the estate of Arthur Waley, whose translations of Chinese poetry Roger Fry at one point wanted to publish at the Omega, until his colleagues convinced him that the maximum number of copies they might sell would be 20 – of the 200 needed to break even on the project.

2

### **Virginia Woolf, 1882–1941**

*Roger Fry: A Biography*

London: Hogarth Press, 1940

Published a year before her death, Woolf's biography describes a newspaperman who visited the Omega Workshops to interview their founder, Roger Fry (1866–1934): "So at last the interviewer took himself off, prophesying that posterity would hold the Omega in honour because 'it had brought beauty and careful workmanship into the common things of life' and . . . the Omega, or Mr Fry, had 'certainly stimulated one's intellect and one's curiosity.'" As with almost all of Woolf's books, Vanessa Bell – herself one of Omega's co-directors – designed the dust-jacket, which features her own portrait of Fry.

3

### **Arthur Clutton-Brock, 1868–1924**

*Simpson's Choice*

London: Omega Workshops, Ltd., 1915 [published 1916]

Roger Fry had borrowed paintings for his 1912 Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition from the French dealer, Ambroise Vollard, who was also a book publisher. Vollard's example, along with that of Charles Vildrac (*see no. 17*), had led Fry from the start to think about book-publishing as something the Omega Workshops might take on, and *Simpson's Choice* was his first such effort. Clutton-Brock, the author of this darkly satiric poem, was an art reviewer for *The Times* and a long-standing friend of Fry.

The creator of the woodcut illustrations was Roald Kristian (*b. 1893*), a Norwegian war émigré who had come to England in 1914 and found work at the Omega. His first project, early in 1915, was a puppet show, and later that year the Omega put on an exhibition of his woodcuts.

4

### **Pierre-Jean Jouve, 1887–1976**

*Men of Europe*

London: Omega Workshops, Ltd., 1915 [published 1916]

Pierre-Jean Jouve was a young French poet whom Roger Fry probably met through his friend Charles Vildrac (*see no. 17*). In February 1916 Fry wrote to Vildrac that he had just published his own translation of some Jouve poems, whose "Whitmanesque rhythm lends itself very easily to an English translation." Like *Simpson's Choice*, the book combines text and graphics, though the woodcuts, again by Roald Kristian, are far smaller: head- and tail-pieces, plus five ornamental capital letters. The jagged, twisted shapes of the larger pieces recall Kristian's cover for *Simpson's Choice*, perhaps his response to the devastating war that had forced him to leave home and would soon lead to his deportation from England.

5

**Virginia Woolf, 1882–1941**  
**Leonard Woolf, 1880–1969**

*Two Stories*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1917

In July 1917, just three months after acquiring their hand press, the Woolfs published 150 copies of this book containing Leonard's "Three Jews" and Virginia's "The Mark on the Wall." In its pairing of text with graphics this first Hogarth Press book resembles the first two Omega books, *Simpson's Choice* and *Men of Europe* (nos. 3–4), and its four woodcuts are by Dora Carrington (1893–1932), who at this same time was working with Fry on Omega's third book, *Lucretius on Death* (no. 6). Both Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell especially liked her print of the serving girl – perhaps because its two figures, the one long-bearded, the other round-faced and short-haired, suggest Lytton Strachey and Carrington herself?

6

**Titus Lucretius Carus**

*Lucretius on Death*

London: Omega Workshops Ltd., 1917

The Omega Workshops' third book was published in late 1917, several months after the appearance of the Woolfs' *Two Stories*. Containing lines 830–1094 of the third book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, the book springs from the collaboration of three artists who would in subsequent years be deeply involved in the Hogarth Press. The translator, R.C. Trevelyan, had long been a friend of Roger Fry – indeed, Fry had designed title-pages for two books of his poems – and was also a close friend of the Woolfs who would publish eight books with the Hogarth Press. Roger Fry, who designed the cover for the book, would contribute seven Hogarth Press books. And Dora Carrington, who executed Fry's design for *Lucretius*, not only illustrated *Two Stories* in 1917 but would also in 1921 create a dramatic cover for Leonard Woolf's *Stories of the East* (no. 11).

7

**Katherine Mansfield, 1888–1923**

*Prelude*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1918  
Two copies shown

*Prelude* proved a huge challenge for the young Hogarth Press. Not only was it more than twice as long as *Two Stories*, the Woolfs also doubled their print run from 150 to 300 copies. The production process, stretched over nine months, outstripped the capacity of their hand press, so that Leonard did most of the printing on a nearby printer friend's treadle press. The book is not illustrated, but its original cover (shown here) carried woodcuts by John Duncan Fergusson (1874–1961), a Scottish artist who was a friend of Mansfield and her husband, John Middleton Murry.

Mansfield recommended Fergusson to the Woolfs, expressly indicating that she didn't want "Roger Fly on it, at any rate." Mansfield noted her slip – "Fly for "Fry" – and rather liked it! One suspects she did *not* like the cover Fry had designed for Omega's *Lucretius* the previous year. In turn, the Woolfs disliked Fergusson's cover design so much that after printing a few copies of it for Mansfield and her friends, they used plain blue wrappers for the remainder of the run (also shown here).

8

*Original Woodcuts by Various Artists*

London: Omega Workshops, Ltd., 1918

No. 38 of 75 copies

Containing woodcuts by seven Omega artists – Roger Fry (4), Vanessa Bell (2), Simon Bussy (1), Duncan Grant (2), E. McKnight Kauffer (1), Roald Kristian (2), and Edward Wolfe (2) – this is both the most distinctive Omega book and also the one most closely tied to the Hogarth Press. Not only did several of its artists become involved with Hogarth Press books, it was the Woolfs who originally conceived of this book – for *their* Press. In July 1917, Virginia, excited by the illustrated *Two Stories*, wrote to Fry that she and her husband were buying a larger press "particularly good for reproducing pictures. . . . Wouldn't it be fun to have books of pictures only?" After a flurry of excitement, the idea of doing this at the Hogarth Press foundered – and was taken over by Omega.

The binding on this copy uses one of three hand-printed papers used for the book, all presumably created at the Omega, with this variation in covers perhaps inspired by the variant papers in which the Woolfs had bound *Two Stories* in 1917. Who designed the paper for the covers of *Woodcuts* is not known, but we know that Carrington experimented in 1917 with creating such covers by the use of linoleum blocks.

9

**Virginia Woolf, 1882–1941**

*Kew Gardens*

London: Hogarth Press, 1919

With a reprint of 1919

The publication of *Kew Gardens* in May 1919 caught the attention of the *Times Literary Supplement*, with the result that the 150 copies of the first edition sold out quickly and the Woolfs rushed a second edition to press (also shown here), this time printed not by hand but by the same commercial press Fry had used for his Omega books.

What caught the attention of the *TLS* reviewer was the book’s artful mingling of text, illustration, and book design, with covers hand-painted by Roger Fry: “[T]he more one gloats over ‘Kew Gardens’ the more beauty shines out of it; and the fitter to it seems this cover that is like no other cover, and carries associations; and the more one likes Mrs. Bell’s ‘Kew Gardens’ woodcuts.” The language recalls what Roger Fry had in 1915 expressed as his goal for Omega books: “The idea will be to publish works of a special character and to give to the setting of the page and the illustrations as perfect a harmony with the literary idea as possible. We intend generally to employ original woodblocks cut by the artist for the illustration and decoration of the text.”

10

**Duncan Grant, 1885–1978**

Pen and ink sketch of hats (for sale at Omega?)

1919

In spring 1919, as the Omega Workshops struggled to stay alive (they would close just months later), Vanessa Bell wrote to Roger Fry that she and Duncan Grant were prepared to paint some hats for sale at the Omega. Frances Spalding, Grant’s biographer, notes that Grant did indeed design and paint some, and Virginia Woolf reports buying one of his hats at the Omega in June 1919. Grant’s sketches shown here, on the back of a spring 1919 flyer from a Dublin gallery, were probably part of this effort. They also suggest, as do Vanessa Bell’s tiles (no. 1), the ease with which Omega artists moved between designing practical objects and creating “pure” art, for hats are a recurrent motif in Grant’s art—note his woodcut of “The Hat Shop” in *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (no. 8) and the stylish hats he includes in his drawings for Clive Bell’s *The Legend of Monte della Sibilla* (no. 20).

11

**Leonard Woolf, 1880–1969**

*Stories of the East*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1921

This book, like the Omega’s *Lucretius on Death*, has no illustrations in the text, but a brilliantly designed cover. For this the Woolfs turned to Carrington, who had both done the woodcuts for their first book and worked with Roger Fry on the cover for *Lucretius*. Katherine Mansfield’s *Prelude* was to have followed the same model, but Fergusson’s cover designs apparently pleased few beyond Mansfield and her husband, while Carrington’s woodcut for Woolf’s book, printed in Chinese red and with echoes of tigers by Thomas Bewick and William Blake, remains one of the most memorable Hogarth Press covers.

12

**Dora Carrington, 1893–1932**

Bookplate for Neil Little

1920

In addition to the woodcuts she contributed to books by the Omega Workshops (no. 6) and the Hogarth Press (nos. 5, 11), Carrington in this same period created many independent woodcuts, a number of them as bookplates. Included among these bookplates are several for Lytton Strachey (1880–1932), one of which appears in Strachey’s copy of *Jacob’s Room* (no. 19), and four for friends of Carrington’s brother, Noel, a student at Christ Church College, Oxford. One of these friends was Neil Little, whose bookplate here appears in his copy of Wilfrid Benson’s novel, *A Foreigner in the Family*, a 1929 Hogarth Press publication.

13

**Roald Kristian, b. 1893**

*A Bestiary*

London: Ovid Press, 1920

No. 86 of 110 copies

This elegant book contains seventeen woodcuts by Edgar de Bergen, a Norwegian artist who under the pseudonym Roald Kristian was active for some two years at the Omega, where he created lampshade and rug designs, illustrated the first two Omega books (nos. 3 and 4), and contributed two pieces to Omega’s *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (no. 8). In 1917



he was arrested and deported as an unregistered alien. Three paintings that he left behind were shown in a 1917 Omega show, and though his *Bestiary* was not published until 1920, the woodcuts in it were also probably created prior to Kristian's arrest and left behind with his wife, Nina Hamnett, also an Omega artist.

14

#### **Virginia Woolf, 1882–1941**

*Monday or Tuesday*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1921

Two copies shown, one from the Chapin Library's collections, the gift of Donald S. Klopfer, Class of 1922

This book, handset by the Woolfs but farmed out for printing to the same shop whose press Leonard had used for much of Mansfield's *Prelude*, contains eight short pieces by Woolf. Accompanying them are five woodcuts by Vanessa Bell, one serving as cover, the others complementing four of the stories. Contrasting this book with Roald Kristian's elegant *Bestiary* (no. 13) highlights the superior printing skills of the Ovid Press (Leonard himself described *Monday or Tuesday* as "one of the worst printed books ever published") as well as the differences between Bell's and Kristian's woodcuts, the former cut with the grain on relatively soft wood, the latter cut across the grain on hard boxwood blocks. Both Bell and Kristian had developed their distinctive woodcutting styles at the Omega, and Bell's cover design recalls many Omega designs, including the large wooden sign that Duncan Grant painted to stand outside the Workshops.

15

#### **Roger Fry, 1866–1934**

*Twelve Original Woodcuts by Roger Fry*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1921

This handsome book, hand-printed by the Woolfs and consisting solely of Fry's prints, is – as its title suggests – a descendant of *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists* (no. 8), Fry's last Omega publication. That book, in turn, had its genesis in the Woolfs' plan to print a book of woodcuts at the Hogarth Press, something they could not manage in 1917 on their small press, but which the larger press they purchased in 1921 made possible. Two entries from Virginia Woolf's diary suggest the hands-on involvement in this book's creation of both the founder of Omega and one of the two founders of the Hogarth Press: "Roger again last night, scraping at his

woodcuts while I sewed; the sound like that of a large pertinacious rat" (April); "Roger's woodcuts, 150 copies, have been gulped down in 2 days. I have just finished stitching the last copies – all but six" (November).

16

Fifth anniversary Hogarth Press promotional leaflet  
1922

For the cover of this leaflet celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Hogarth Press – and advertising its stock – the Woolfs returned to the Press's first book, *Two Stories*, and to one of the woodcuts that Carrington, an Omega artist, had created for it. The inside of the brochure lists both those books currently available from the Press and a number of earlier books that are now out of print (*Two Stories* among them).

17

#### **Charles Vildrac, 1882–1971**

*Découvertes*

Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 1912

Charles Vildrac, a French poet and painter, was a close friend of Roger Fry and co-founder of the Abbaye Group (1906–7), whose members supported themselves in part by printing and publishing books – a cooperative venture not unlike what Fry would attempt in the Omega Workshops. Vildrac also had an art gallery in Paris, and with his friends (Matisse among them) helped Fry to assemble the French art included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1912. At Fry's invitation, Vildrac attended this 1912 Exhibition and apparently presented this book – which contains a prose poem dedicated to Fry – as a thank-you gift, inscribing the book to Fry "en profonde estime et affection, Londres, nov. 1912" ("with profound esteem and affection, London, November 1912"). On the final pages of the book, someone, presumably Roger Fry (whose copy it was), has drawn two pencil sketches of a lanky bearded man who closely resembles Vildrac, placing this figure against the backdrop of dancing nudes modeled on those of Matisse's *La Danse*, one of the key paintings at the 1912 show.

Vildrac's visit occurred in the months that led up to the opening of the Omega Workshops in 1913, and this book's handcrafted binding so resembles that of the Omega's *Woodcuts* (no. 8) that one suspects someone at Omega may at Fry's behest have created it (another linoleum print by Carrington?) to bind Vildrac's paper-bound original.

**EARLY HAND-BOUND BOOKS OF THE HOGARTH PRESS**

Hope Mirrlees, *Paris A Poem*, 1919 [published 1920],  
two copies in variant wrappers

E.M. Forster, *The Story of the Siren*, 1920

Logan Pearsall Smith, *Stories from the Old Testament*,  
1920, three copies in variant wrappers

Early Hogarth Press books were also frequently hand-bound (cf. such books at the Omega, nos. 8 and 16), and the Woolfs devoted particular attention to finding distinctive papers for the covers, sometimes purchasing these papers from abroad, sometimes commissioning them from friends (e.g., Fry's cover for *Kew Gardens*), and sometimes – as Virginia mentions gleefully – buying them cheaply at a local stationery shop. The papers used for the books in this case appear to fall into this last category.

Though the Woolfs turned to a commercial printer for Pearsall Smith's book while they themselves printed those by Mirrlees and Forster, Virginia Woolf herself bound all of them – as she did most of the other early Hogarth Press books in this show – and all betray amateurish touches reminiscent of the Omega's *Woodcuts* (no. 8). Around the same time that she bound the Mirrlees and Forster books in the spring of 1920, Virginia used a similar diamond-patterned paper to bind the notebook, now in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, in which she drafted the first part of *Jacob's Room* (no. 19).

**Virginia Woolf, 1882–1941**

*Jacob's Room*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1922

Leonard Woolf comments that when this book first appeared, Vanessa Bell's dust-jacket was "almost universally condemned" by booksellers and buyers: "It did not represent a desirable female or even Jacob or his room. . . ." This and other jackets Vanessa created for Virginia's books became in time much admired, and in fact this jacket's stylized evocation of a room fits the novel well. Bell's design motifs – drapes, a vase with flowers – have many counterparts in work done at the Omega Workshops – e.g. the door panels shown here that Bell and Grant created in 1918 for the Bells' London home at 46 Gordon Square. Also linking this book to the Omega is its bookplate, a woodcut created by Carrington for its owner, Lytton Strachey, who has signed this copy as well.

**Clive Bell, 1881–1964**

*The Legend of Monte Della Sibilla  
or Le Paradis de la Reine Sibille*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1923

In both genesis and design, this book is quintessential Bloomsbury. Written by Clive Bell, an inveterate philanderer; hand-printed by Leonard and Virginia Woolf; illustrated by Vanessa Bell, Clive Bell's wife and Virginia Woolf's sister, and by Duncan Grant, Vanessa's lover, the book embodies the open-minded and often unconventional lives of the Bloomsbury artistic community. The book's cover by Vanessa Bell, and the drawings inside by Grant and herself, perfectly capture the tone of what one critic has described as this "rollicking immorality tale." They also again echo in form, substance, and tone much of the art that emerged from Omega – e.g. the Grant and Bell woodcuts shown above (no. 8), or a harpsichord and bed decorated by Roger Fry, who also in the teens had a passionate affair with Vanessa Bell.

**G.H. Luce, 1889–1979**

*Poems*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1923

With a reprint of 1924

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), who had been romantically involved with Luce when they were students at Cambridge in the early teens, financed publication of this book by Macmillan in 1920. Three years later, the Hogarth Press reprinted it, this time with two illustrations by Duncan Grant. Note the stylized drapes that frame both drawings, as in the Omega designs that Grant and Bell created in 1918 for 46 Gordon Square – at the request of Keynes! – and that Bell used also in her design for the cover of *Jacob's Room* (no. 19).

**Robert Graves, 1895–1985**

*The Feather Bed*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1923

The cover of this hand-printed book, reminiscent in design of that for Vildrac's *Découvertes*, is the work of William Nicholson (1872–1949), Robert Graves' father-in-law. Nicholson was one of the English artists who in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had revived the art

of the woodcut, and had kindled Roger Fry's interest in a medium that would become important both for the Omega Workshops and for Fry himself (cf. nos. 8 and 15); his son, Ben Nicholson, would become a leading English painter, and would design the cover for a 1934 Hogarth Press book, V. Sackville-West's *Dark Island*.

23

**Roger Fry, 1866–1934**

*A Sampler of Castile*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1923

No. 428 of 550 copies

In 1927 Fry described this book as “the only one which I wrote because I really wanted to for myself alone,” and 1923 correspondence with Virginia Woolf reveals his delight in its publication. Fry provided the line drawings that accompany the text as well as the cover design, whose mosaic figure both draws on Fry's long-term interest in Byzantine mosaics and recalls the various mosaics Fry and his colleagues had produced for Omega clients. Although not hand-printed, all 550 copies of the book are numbered in purple ink – a clear indication of Virginia Woolf's personal involvement in their creation.

24

**Roger Fry, 1866–1934**

*Living Painters: Duncan Grant*

Richmond, Surrey: Hogarth Press, 1923

With the reissue of 1930

In his introduction to this selection of twenty-four works by Duncan Grant, Roger writes that Grant “fortunately . . . has found an outlet from time to time in his decorative work. . . . When he was working at the Omega workshops his fellow-artists all recognized the peculiar charm, the unexpected originality, and the rare distinction of his ideas. . . .” Given Fry's comments, it is not surprising that a number of the Grant works illustrated in the book are Omega-type projects – a screen, a stage design, a ballet costume – or that Grant's cover exemplifies Omega-like graphic design.

25

**Roger Fry, 1866–1934**

*Cézanne: A Study of His Development*

London: Hogarth Press, 1927

Fry's 1927 book on Cézanne goes back to an artist central to both of Fry's Post-Impressionist Exhibitions at the Grafton Galleries in London. In addition, Fry's thinking about Cézanne and Gauguin, another artist prominent in these exhibitions, fed directly into his goal of uniting art and design, the pure arts and the applied arts, in the Omega Workshops. In 1924 Fry commented: “With the appearance of the Cézannian art in England [i.e. in the Post-Impressionist exhibitions], and most of all with the first sight of Gauguin's intensely decorative silhouettes, the younger English artists began at once to practice design in a way that made them again fit to take a hand in the applied arts.”

26

**THE HOGARTH ESSAYS, FIRST SERIES**

London: Hogarth Press, 1924–25

Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, 1924

Theodora Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, 1924

(hand-printed by the Woolfs)

T.S. Eliot, *Homage to John Dryden*, 1924

E.M. Forster, *Anonymity*, 1925

John Maynard Keynes, *A Short View of Russia*, 1925

Vanessa Bell's designs for the covers of the Hogarth essays again draw on recurrent Omega motifs. Her cover for the early essays shows a woman reading, with head sharply tilted to the side, a figure for whom there are close analogues in both her own Omega work and that of Duncan Grant; for the later essays her design features a flower-filled vase, a motif so common among Omega artists as to be almost an Omega signature. The only essay not to carry one of these designs is that of John Maynard Keynes, the cover of which features instead an early appearance of the wolf's head design that Bell created as a device for the Woolfs' Hogarth Press. The five individual essays on display are among the most famous and influential of the nineteen in the first series; other authors represented include Roger Fry, Herbert Read, Edith Sitwell, and Robert Graves.

27

**THE HOGARTH ESSAYS, SECOND SERIES**

London: Hogarth Press, 1926–28

Gertrude Stein, *Composition as Explanation*, 1926

Robert Graves, *Impenetrability*, 1926

Leonard Woolf, *Hunting the Highbrow*, 1926

Charles Mauron, *The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature*, 1927

Elizabeth Robins, *Ibsen and the Actress*, 1928

Basil de Selincourt, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 1928

Building on the success of their first series of Hogarth Essays, the Woolfs in 1926 initiated a second series, this time in a smaller format but again with cover designs by Vanessa Bell. Her covers for this second series are perhaps even more reminiscent of Omega than those for the first. Not only does pure design completely replace any figurative representation – e.g. the woman and the vase of flowers of the first series – but both designs recall iconic Omega images: the first, Bell’s Omega-inspired cover for *Monday or Tuesday* (no. 14), and the second, Duncan Grant’s 1915 signboard for the Omega Workshops. Compare too the prominent use of cross-hatching in the second design with the Vanessa Bell tiles at the start of this show (no. 1).

The second series of essays numbered sixteen, of which six are included in this show.

28

*The Hogarth Essays*

Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1928

Published only in the United States, this one-volume anthology of essays from both the First and Second Series includes a number of the most distinguished – and eye-catching – pieces (e.g. Woolf on “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Eliot on Dryden, Stein on “Composition as Explanation”). Of particular interest is its jacket’s colored version of one of the covers that Vanessa Bell had created for the First Series of Hogarth Essays – with colors and design which, again, recall the Bell tiles included in this show (no. 1).

29

**HOGARTH STORIES**

London: Hogarth Press, 1927

Charles Davies, *Welshman’s Way*, 1927

Lord Olivier, *The Empire Builder*, 1927

The Hogarth Stories series, inaugurated in 1927, was to have included many entries, but poor early sales led the Woolfs to limit the series to the two books in this show. Vanessa Bell’s symmetrical cover design again has strong echoes of the Omega Workshops device, especially in its more flattened versions.

30

**Virginia Woolf, 1882–1941**

*Kew Gardens*

Third edition

London: Hogarth Press, 1927

This handsome volume, a reissue of the small book that first catalyzed public interest in the Hogarth Press (no. 9), is as close as this Press ever came to producing a “coffee table book.” As in the 1919 first edition, Vanessa Bell’s artwork complements Virginia Woolf’s story, this time not, however, in figurative woodcut illustrations but, as in so much of Vanessa’s Hogarth Press work during this period, through elegant designs that play imaginative variations on Bell’s usual repertoire of Omega motifs (including once again a vase with flowers for her cover!) but that bear only peripherally on the story.

31

**HOGARTH LIVING POETS, FIRST SERIES**

London: Hogarth Press, 1928–32

Robinson Jeffers, *Roan Stallion Tamar and Other Poems*, 1928

Christopher Saltmarshe, John Davenport, and Basil Wright, eds., *Cambridge Poetry 1929*

C. Day Lewis, *Transitional Poem*, 1929

Dorothy Wellesley, ed., *A Broadcast Anthology of Modern Poetry*, 1930

For the Hogarth Living Poets, Vanessa Bell again created two different cover designs. The first, used for the first eight volumes, returns quite explicitly to design elements familiar from her covers for *Monday or Tuesday* (no. 14) and the Hogarth Stories (no. 29), this time with a great sunburst in the center. For the remaining sixteen volumes, her design resembles that

used for John Maynard Keynes' Hogarth essay, with lines framing her own wolf's-head device for the Hogarth Press. Among poets included in the 1930 *Broadcast Anthology of Modern Poetry* on display here are Rupert Brooke, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, V. Sackville-West, Siegfried Sassoon, and Edith Sitwell.

32

**DAY TO DAY PAMPHLETS**

London: Hogarth Press, 1930–39

Aneurin Bevan, *What We Saw in Russia*, 1931

Harold J. Laski, *The Crisis and the Constitution*, 1932

Benito Mussolini, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, 1933

S.H. Bailey, *Mr. Roosevelt's Experiments*, 1935

Leonard Woolf, *The League and Abyssinia*, 1936

H.G. Wells, *The Idea of a World Encyclopedia*, 1936

W.H. Auden and T.C. Worsley, *Education Today – and Tomorrow*, 1939

From the start, the Woolfs sought to publish through the Hogarth Press significant essays and books which, because of their short compass or limited audience, commercial presses would consider not viable. The forty Day to Day Pamphlets, seven of which are on display, are among the Press' most characteristic realizations of this mission, and embody also the Woolfs' strong interest in social, political, and economic issues. For the covers of these pamphlets, the Woolfs turned to E. McKnight Kauffer (1890–1954), another Omega artist but one strongly influenced by Picasso (compare the woodcut he created for the Omega's 1918 *Original Woodcuts by Various Artists*, no. 8). McKnight Kauffer's simple cover design for the Pamphlets resembles Vanessa Bell's second cover for the Hogarth Living Poets, but with his own streamlined and stylized version of the Hogarth Press wolf's-head device replacing Bell's more realistic version.

33

**E. McKnight Kauffer, 1890–1954**

**DUST-JACKETS**

E. McKnight Kauffer also designed dust-jackets for four Hogarth Press books, of which two are shown here: George Rylands' *Words and Poetry* (1928), and Leonard Woolf's *Quack, Quack!* (1935). Both illustrate the more contemporary style that McKnight Kauffer brought to his work at the Press (as well as to the posters he designed for the London Underground), and his jacket

for *Quack, Quack!* vividly conveys Woolf's theme, the danger posed to civilization by the demagogic rhetoric of Hitler and Mussolini.

34

**THE HOGARTH LETTERS, 1931–33**

**HOGARTH LIVING POETS, SECOND SERIES, 1933–37**

**HOGARTH WORLD-MAKERS AND WORLD-SHAKERS, 1937**

Peter Quennell, *A Letter to Mrs. Virginia Woolf*, 1932

Virginia Woolf, *A Letter to a Young Poet*, 1932

Rebecca West, *A Letter to a Grandfather*, 1933

John Lehman, *The Noise of History*, 1934

Julian Bell, *Work for the Winter and Other Poems*, 1936

L.B. Pekin, *Darwin*, 1937

The designs for these 1930s series of Hogarth Press books and pamphlets, all by John Banting, exemplify the new and different look of Hogarth books in the post-Omega generation. They have a clear tie to Omega in their similarity to the work of E. McKnight Kauffer, an Omega artist, but they feel far distant from the world of Bell, Grant, Fry, and Carrington. On display are three of the twelve Hogarth Letters, two of the five books in the second series of Living Poets, and one from the World-Makers and World-Shakers series.

35

**Roger Fry, 1866–1934**

**Duncan Grant, 1885–1978**

**Vanessa Bell, 1879–1961**

**DUST-JACKETS OF THE 1920S AND EARLY 1930S**

Even as the Woolfs and the Hogarth Press moved toward a new generation of authors, W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood among them, and to a new generation of designers such as E. McKnight Kauffer and John Banting, they continued to turn to the older artists of the Omega group. In 1929, Roger Fry created a highly distinctive jacket for William Plomer's *Paper Houses*. Duncan Grant's insouciant cover design for Julia Strachey's 1932 novel, *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding*, is among the gems of Hogarth Press jackets. And Vanessa Bell continued throughout the 1920s to create remarkable jackets for Virginia Woolf's books as they appeared, among them *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Common Reader* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *A Room of One's Own* (1929). In the character of their designs and even in the specific visual motifs employed, all six of these jackets show their close ties in Omega.

**Vanessa Bell, 1879–1961**

## DUST-JACKETS FOR VIRGINIA WOOLF'S LATER BOOKS

The Omega influence remains strong in the jackets Vanessa Bell created for her sister's 1930 books. Note, for instance, the cross-hatching on the spine, the urn with flowers and drapes on the rear cover, of *On Being Ill* (1930), one of the Woolfs' last hand-printed books; the woman reading in an arm-chair on *The Common Reader*, Second Series (1931); the assemblage of familiar motifs on the cover of *Walter Sickert: A Conversation* (1934). Also on display are Bell's cover for *Three Guineas* (1938), which Leonard Woolf particularly admired, and two examples from later years, both still redolent of Omega: *Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters* (1956), and *Granite and Rainbow* (1958). The latter shows close similarities in design and color to the Bell tiles featured at the start of this show.

*The copy of Three Guineas is from the Chapin Library's collections, the gift of Donald S. Klopfer, Class of 1922.*

**Vanessa Bell, 1879–1961**OTHER VANESSA BELL DUST-JACKETS  
FOR THE HOGARTH PRESS

While one associates Vanessa Bell with her dust-jackets for Virginia Woolf's books (which Bell continued to create long after Virginia's death), she also created imaginative jackets, again frequently with strong Omega echoes, for other authors as well. Included in this show are her jackets for Susan Buchan's *Funeral March of a Marionette* (1935), Edward Upward's *Journey to the Border* (1938), Joan Adeney Easdale's *Amber Innocent* (1939), and Henry Green's *Back* (1945: flowers in a window yet once more!).

Also shown here is Vanessa Bell's decorative cover for the *Complete Catalogue* of Hogarth Press publications available in the first part of 1939.

**Adrian Stephen, 1883–1948***The Dreadnought Hoax*

London: Hogarth Press, 1936

In February 1910, a group of young people with Cambridge and Bloomsbury ties dressed up as the Emperor of Abyssinia and his entourage and managed to get themselves received and given a state tour of the newest and largest battleship in the Royal Navy, the *Dreadnought*. The group included Duncan Grant (second from the left on the cover, and in a turban he must have enjoyed: cf. no. 10 in this show), Virginia Stephen (later Woolf, far left), and her younger brother Adrian (third from left), who, using garbled Virgilian Latin as his "Abyssinian," served as interpreter and later wrote this account of the event. That Duncan and Virginia participated is appropriate, for the chutzpah with which the hoaxers carried off their caper is of a piece with the at times impertinent bravado that they and their colleagues would bring to the Omega Workshops and the Hogarth Press. This 1936 book itself retains something of that spirit. As an obvious send-up of the "military establishment," it bespeaks the Woolfs' concern over the relentless build-up toward World War II, including the take-over of Abyssinia by Mussolini, an event which Leonard Woolf explicitly addressed in a Hogarth Day to Day Pamphlet of the same year, *The League and Abyssinia* (see no. 32).

**Roger Fry, 1866–1934**  
**Charles Mauron***Some Poems of Mallarmé*

London: Chatto & Windus, 1938

This book again takes us back to Roger Fry and the early Omega/Hogarth days – and to another of those Frenchmen who had such an impact on his thinking and his work. Fry came to know Charles Mauron in the early 1920s and repeatedly sought his advice and assistance on a project that he had begun during the period of the Omega Workshops, a translation into English of selected poems by the French poet Mallarmé. Fry's letters to the Woolfs during the early 1920s frequently mention his hope that these translations would be published by the Hogarth Press, but he never completed the project. In 1928, Fry asked Mauron to write a commentary for his translations, and after Fry's

death Mauron and Julian Bell, Vanessa and Clive Bell's son, drew on Fry's notes to complete the long-imagined volume. The jacket by Vanessa Bell is among her most evocative, a tribute to her long-time colleague and friend, the founder of the Omega Workshops, in much the same way as is her sister's 1940 biography of the same man (no. 2).

40

### **Libby Benedict**

*The Refugees*

London: Hogarth Press, 1938

Dummy copy and published book

This mock-up for Benedict's 1938 book is of interest both in itself – Hogarth Press dummies are rare – and for the handwritten jottings that fill many of its pages. Writing paper was hard to come by in the years following 1938, and this volume's blank pages were put to a variety of uses by the denizens of Charleston, the Bell-Grant home from whose library it comes. Filling numerous pages are the exercises of someone learning Russian – probably Quentin Bell, who around 1940 was studying Russian with Lydia Lopokova, the wife of economist John Maynard Keynes. Other portions of the book contain extensive jottings on military history for the years 1712–18, penciled maps and coats of arms, and an exquisite drawing of a woman who resembles Angelica Garnett, daughter of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant and Quentin's half-sister. Perhaps most interesting is what appears on the book's front pastedown, a rudimentary sketch of a figure with extended arms and leaning head. The image is strongly reminiscent of female figures sketched by Vanessa Bell from her Omega days on, though given what looks like a net in the background, whoever drew it may here have transformed this familiar motif into a soccer goalie with waving arms! Whoever drew it – Vanessa? Quentin? – it is one more metamorphosis of Omega, here placed at the entry-point to this Hogarth Press dummy.

Also on display are Benedict's published book and the evocative jacket created for it.

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