“Uproar!”: The early years of The London Group, 1913–28

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From its explosive arrival on the British art scene in 1913 as a radical alternative to the art establishment, the early history of The London Group was one of noisy dissent. Its controversial early years reflect the upheavals associated with the introduction of British modernism and the experimental work of many of its early members. Although its first two exhibitions have been seen with hindsight as ‘triumphs of collective action’,[1] ironically, the Group’s very success in bringing together such disparate artistic factions as the English ‘Cubists’ and the Camden Town painters only underlined the fragility of their union – a union that was further threatened, even before the end of the first exhibition, by the early death of Camden Town Group President, Spencer Gore. Roger Fry observed at The London Group’s formation how ‘almost all artist groups’, were, ‘like the protozoa […] fissiparous and breed by division. They show their vitality by the frequency with which they split up’. While predicting it would last only two or three years, he also acknowledged how the Group had come ‘together for the needs of life of two quite separate organisms, which give each other mutual support in an unkindly world’.[2]

In its first five decades this mutual support was, in truth, short-lived, as ‘Uproar’ raged on many fronts both inside and outside the Group. These fronts included the hostile press reception of the ultra-modernists; the rivalry between the Group and contemporary artists’ exhibiting societies, such as the New English Art Club in the Group’s first decade and the Seven and Five Society (so-called after the nucleus of painters and sculptors it aspired to encompass)[3] in its second; the internecine warfare between different factions (Camden Town and the Vorticists, pro- and anti-Bloomsbury, Surrealists versus realists, figuration versus abstraction); as well as frequent warfare between individual members with strong personalities (Walter Sickert and Wyndham Lewis, Lewis and Fry, Fry and C R W Nevinson); occasionally the battles dwindled into mere point-scoring and wrangling (particularly over Cézanne).

Moreover, the press clearly viewed such a collaboration of progressives to be a deliberate act of provocation. The *Observer*'s art critic, P G Konody, set the tone for early critical reaction when he declared that the 'very aggressive blue' of the inaugural invitation card was an 'indication of the defiant attitude of the members'.[4] The Group's very *raison d'être* was understood to be its capacity to create outrage. Yet a close reading of the Group through its contemporaneous press reception over this important first half-century also reveals how, to a large extent, the press itself perpetuated this 'revolutionary and anarchic image'.[5] Always keen to exploit perceived disputes and controversies, it was unwilling perhaps to lose such a rich source of eye-catching headlines and arresting copy; certainly, later more widespread press approval reflected a blunting of the Group's radical edge. Nevertheless, the Group's first 50 years not only coincided with a remarkable period in British modernism, but also acted in its earliest exhibitions as an important platform, promoter and disseminator of progressive art and ideas. Many of the works that initially caused the most outrage, including David Bomberg's *In the Hold* (*c.* 1913-14, Tate), Jacob Epstein's *Rock Drill* (*c.* 1913-15; bronze torso, Tate) and Mark Gertler's *Merry-Go-Round* (1916, Tate), are today regarded as among the most important in the British modernist canon, and the wide range of artistic groups and styles which these years encompassed are a further tribute to the Group's ultimate success in absorbing and reflecting such diversity.

Remarkably, the exact date of the first exhibition, which took place in early March 1914 at William Marchant's Goupil Gallery in Regent Street, is unknown. It contained 116 paintings and drawings by 26 artists, just under a third (seven) of whom were women, with two sculptors (Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska), each showing four works.[6] The first hanging committee was a model of proportional representation, balancing Camden Town group members: Gore, Harold Gilman (president, 1914–19), J B Manson (1879–1945) and Renée Finch (*fl.* 1907−16) – against the emerging Vorticists: Lewis, Edward Wadsworth and (by association) Epstein. The inclusion of both a sculptor and a female painter were also significant markers of future intentions.[7]

Camden Town exhibits including Gore's Letchworth landscape,[8] Gilman's striking portrait of fellow member Sylvia Gosse,[9] and both versions of his subtly subversive *Eating House*, were certainly admired, but here the balance ended. Arthur Clutton-Brock headlined his *Times* review "The Cubists' Error", pointing out that the exhibition contained two groups: one deriving from Sickert, the other from Picasso and that the pictures 'did not agree well with each other'.[10] In their haste to portray the 'new', he argued, the Futurists had obscured their own meaning.[11] Sir Claude Phillips (*Daily Telegraph*) agreed, protesting against a 'swamping, a drowning of what remains of the original group by the Cubists and their following', insisting that 'their hordes have invaded the society and victoriously appropriated the greater part of the wall-space', making the Camden Town Group look 'serious and almost academic by contrast with the onrushing kaleidoscopes'.[12] The term 'kaleidoscopic' was widely invoked to describe the brilliantly fractured, dynamic compositions of Lewis[13] and Bomberg; the latter's frenetically-charged canvas, *In the Hold*, reflected the common immigrant experience of travelling steerage, as well as the dramatic dislocation of the newly-arrived. T E Hulme of the *New Age* criticised Lewis but supported Bomberg; Konody criticised both for their 'geometrical obfuscations'.[14] Lewis mischievously fed the flames declaring that 'our object is to bewilder […] we want to shock the senses and get you into a condition of mind in which you'll grasp what our intentions are'.[15]

Critics were annoyed by the lack of representation, the associations with mechanisation and speed, and particularly the obscure titles. It was suggested, for example, that Lewis's titles 'might be indiscriminately transferred from one to the other without anybody being the wiser for it'.[16] Yet Nevinson's *Portrait of a Motorist*, which included glass goggles and a real coat button, while wholly comprehensible, was considered 'childishly crude'.[17] By contrast, the more traditional work by Walter Bayes (1869–1956, founder member 1913), *Flint Rafts of the Somme*, was felt to act 'as a pleasant sedative upon nerves excited by the fierce assaults of the artistic firebrands'.[18]

From the start, the new Group was billed as the opposition not only to the Royal Academy but to the prevailing anti-establishment exhibiting society, the New English Art

Club (NEAC).[19] Critics enjoyed speculating over which – to borrow a phrase from Sickert – was 'the newer English Art Club of the two?'.[20] The *Manchester Guardian* shrewdly observed, under the headline 'The Revolutionaries', that the NEAC's jubilee exhibition:

> seems to have coincided with the formation of a society to supersede it […] Everyone will be pleased that such a society has come into existence, the frivolous because it will tend to keep the older societies free of eccentricities, and the serious because they know that if art is a real thing every generation must have its fling and dance to its own piping.[21]

The new Group was seen as a society for the young and contemporary – Konody suggested (sarcastically) that all the other galleries had been 'left miles behind'[22], while Manson, a former NEAC member himself, argued that the older society merely housed 'a whole crowd of reactionaries'.[23] This rivalry, which continued for many years, was frequently cited by critics as they examined the two societies side by side.[24]

Ezra Pound, reviewing the first Group show in the *Egoist*, noted that it deserved 'the attention of everyone interested in either painting or sculpture', drawing attention to the important inclusion of the sculptors Epstein and Gaudier. Both had a considerable impact on early shows.[25] Although Konody lost patience with Gaudier's 'affectations in stone',[26] including his innovative semi-abstract *Red Stone Dancer* (*c.* 1913, Tate), Fry recognised that he was 'one of the most interesting sculptors working in England […] very brilliant and facile, and a master of his craft'.[27] Hulme in his *New Age* review called Epstein 'certainly the greatest sculptor of this generation'.[28]

By the time the second London Group show opened a year later, however, the landscape had changed: the Vorticists had founded their own home at the Rebel Art Centre in spring 1914, followed by the launch of Lewis's iconoclastic journal *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* in July. The still ruder blast of war, which succeeded it the following month, profoundly affected not only the character of the Group, but also the work produced, its reception, and even its membership. The second exhibition in March 1915 was a smaller show comprising 96 works, including six sculptures by Epstein and Gaudier. Gaudier, having already returned to France and enlisted, also sent drawings

including *A Mitrailleuse in Action* and *One of our Shells is Bursting*, carried out, as the catalogue noted, 'in the trenches at Craonne'. The *Connoisseur* complained that in the work of Epstein, which included his highly simplified relief depicting the act of giving birth, *Carving in Flenite*,[29] and others, 'the aesthetic tendencies of the most advanced school of modern art are leading us back to the primitive instincts of the savage.'[30] Lewis's brilliant depiction of existential alienation in *The Crowd*, clashed with Gosse's 'charming' *New Recruit*;[31] and the *Times* noted rightly how their pictures seemed 'to belong to different ages and continents'.[32]

Meanwhile the *Englishwoman* derided the Vorticist experiments of Lewis, Wadsworth and William Roberts as those of 'artistic lunatics'; in the climate of war, it was felt, there was 'no time to waste on monkeys on sticks'.[33] Although Lewis wittily rebutted the criticism that they were 'Junkers' or 'Prussians' in art,[34] in his own ambiguous review of the exhibition he also drew attention to the contradictory aims of the Group's two principal sections, and in fact (apart from the 1928 retrospective), this was his final showing within the Group. The increasingly jingoistic and worryingly xenophobic remarks continued, however, and critics drew attention to artists who had attended the private view and were not in uniform, also highlighting distinctly foreign-sounding names – one asking whether 'Gaudier-Brzeska' was simply 'an invention devised by the exhibition committee to impress the public?'.[35]

In this atmosphere, it was hardly surprising that Nevinson and Epstein, with their powerful depictions of dehumanised, highly mechanised modern warfare, dominated press attention. Nevinson, though medically unfit to be a soldier, had hands-on experience as a Red Cross ambulance driver and then a Royal Army Medical Corps nurse. His resulting images, including the painted version of *Returning to the Trenches*,[36] made him 'one of the most talked about artists in London'.[37] As Frank Rutter noted, his were 'the first war pictures to create a stir. They were topical, they were new things shown in a new way. Nevinson had got his blow in first, and he capture[d] the imagination of London as no subsequent painter of the War was able to do'.[38]

Critics failed to notice, however, the dystopian prophecy of Epstein's *Rock Drill*, a life-size visored figure carrying its own progeny and mounted on a ready-made drill, but censured it anyway for the 'irreconcilable contradiction between the crude realism of the real machinery (of American make) combined with an abstractly treated figure'.[39] Erstwhile supporter Augustus John advised the American collector John Quinn against buying it, calling it 'altogether the most hideous thing I've seen'.[40] Afterwards, reacting to the carnage of the First World War, and perhaps to Gaudier's premature death, Epstein cropped the figure. The resulting wounded torso, shorn of the masculine power associated with the new machine age that had been so much a feature of the original piece, alluded perhaps to the tragic losses of the conflict.

The Group's third exhibition, in November 1915, was notable for the absence of many radicals, particularly Lewis, Bomberg and Wadsworth, now all involved in the war. In fact, only 18 of the 34 members (largely Camden Towners) chose to exhibit, creating an aesthetic unity at which Mark Gertler, exhibiting for the first time, rebelled, 'What a rubbishy show!', he commented, 'All the pictures, except my own, were composed of washed out purples and greens, and they matched so well that it seemed almost as if the artists all collaborated in order to create harmony […] In reality it means simply that they all paint alike and equally badly!'[41]. Against this backdrop his colourful, experimental work, including *The Creation of Eve* (1914, Private Collection), stood out the more strongly, but Gertler was astonished to learn that his pictures had created 'a tremendous uproar!'. The critics, he wrote, were 'quite mad with rage. […] One paper said that I had done them simply to shock and create a sensation!'.[42] In the febrile atmosphere of anti-German feeling, such extremes of modernism were seen as unpatriotic and even 'hunnishly indecent'.[43]

Yet the fourth show, in June 1916, despite including Epstein's truncated *Rock Drill* torso (the sole sculpture), attracted the damning comment that there was hardly anything 'that would seem remarkable in the Academy'.[44] Nevinson had now replaced Wadsworth as secretary, a role in which he was perhaps not entirely comfortable. Ethelbert White (1891–1972, elected 1916), later recalled watching Bomberg climb the Goupil's stairs,

labouring under ‘a canvas of vast proportions’, only to be met by Nevinson at the top, who told him, partly in jest, ‘that no works could be hung if the member’s subscription had not been paid. Bomberg with a good-tempered grin hauled his enormous canvas back down into Regent Street, and although members of the hanging committee ran down to recall him, all they saw was a great sail tacking across Piccadilly’.[45] With Lewis’s departure, the wilder element seemed tamed, despite the inclusion among non-members exhibiting for the first time of Vorticist follower Lawrence Atkinson (1873–1931). Sickert, who showed for the first time as a non-member, was elected soon afterwards and sat on the next hanging committee but was too late to champion Matthew Smith’s boldly provocative *Fitzroy Street Nude, no. 2* (1916, British Council Collection),[46] submitted at his urging, but, in a move of uncharacteristic censorship, rejected by the committee. Although Smith began to exhibit still lifes as a non-member that autumn, the Group had not proved brave enough to showcase his most experimental work.

The fifth show, in November 1916, included two versions (a drawing and an oil) of Gilman’s profoundly humanist portraits of his landlady, *Mrs Mounter*, and of war convalescents in *Roberts 8* (1916, Private Collection),[47] completed before his appointment as Official War Artist the following year. Compulsory military service (for men aged 16–41) had been introduced in January 1916 and the practice of handing out white feathers to service-aged men not in uniform was then at its height. This was the last London Group exhibition to be held at the Goupil’s premises, however, as Marchant’s refusal to show work by conscientious objectors led to the Group’s courageous decision to leave the space – a move widely interpreted in the press (who were unaware of Marchant’s reasons) as an expulsion on the grounds of extreme modernism. The Group was threatened with homelessness until Ambrose Heal offered a welcome alternative space at his Mansard Galleries.

Although at least two members, Gertler and Adrian Allinson (1890–1959, elected 1914), held pacifist views, it is unlikely that Marchant knew this. Ironically, it was at the sixth show in April 1917, the first in Heal’s premises, that Gertler showed his anti-war masterpiece *Merry-Go-Round*, greeted by the *Evening News* as ‘a shriek, a groan, a hoot,

a blare, a tempest of wild rending and most discordant noise'.[48] The painting's pacifist message was clear to Gertler's circle. Lytton Strachey famously wrote that he 'admired it of course, but as for *liking* it, one might as well think of liking a machine-gun',[49] while the lawyer St John Hutchinson, who had already legally represented several conscientious objectors, warned Gertler against exhibiting it at the Group, predicting it would 'raise a tremendous outcry – the old, the wise, the professional critic will go mad with righteous indignation', causing them to 'write all sorts of rubbish about German art and German artists'.[50] Yet astonishingly, though Nevinson's *When Harry Tate Comes Down* was criticised as 'a gratuitously unkind caricature of our wounded heroes', critics failed to detect the *Merry-Go-Round*'s anti-military message, concentrating instead on its outrageous modernism. Its positioning opposite Sickert's *Suspense* was also much commented upon. C Lewis Hind in the *Daily Chronicle* called *Merry-Go-Round* 'the best specimen I have ever seen of Frightfulness in Art. […] O, how clever! O, how strident! It shouts across the gallery. I feel that "Suspense" must jump up and scream'.[51] Although Sickert was welcomed back as the 'Father of the group' and 'a Master who has strayed wearily, but with resignation into a frolic of youth',[52] it was the *Merry-Go-Round* controversy that revitalised the Group by confirming its reputation (following the Smith incident), as a platform for extreme modernism.

Edward McKnight Kauffer (1890–1954, elected 1916), who had exhibited as a non-member in the previous exhibition, also came to attention in the same exhibition, not least for the bold graphics and 'pugilistic crème-de-menthe' of his press invitation card. The *Evening News* observed that:

> the figures appear to be either:-
> Flying buttresses taking a walk.
> Painters running off with their employers' ladders; or
> Red Indians in bowler hats joyfully going out to tomahawk some victims.
> This is interesting, as a picture should always, in fact, be.[53]

McKnight Kauffer, who became best-known as chief poster designer for the London Underground, also designed several striking exhibition posters between 1918 and 1919. In a separate review entitled 'Colour Gone Mad. "The London Group" By Our Own Philistine', the *Star* attacked his painting *Low Tide* as showing 'a purple bridge all out of

drawing, with yellow shadows, and red, white and blue barges sailing across a pink and green sky. These colours may not be accurate, but they are all there. The thing is a prismatic mess which might have been hung upside down (and probably is) without damage to its title. This is priced by Mr. Kauffer at 30 guineas.'[54]

With seven female founder members – Finch, Gosse, Jessie Etchells (1892−1933), Anna Hope Hudson (1869–1957), Stanislawa de Karlowska (1876–1952),[55] Thérèse Lessore (1884–1945) and Ethel Sands 1873–1962)[56] –women were always a vital component of the Group.[57] The majority were part of Sickert's circle but, having been excluded from the Camden Town Group on account of their sex, no doubt realised the importance of retaining their membership in spite of his own erratic participation.[58] Their position was in some ways contradictory. Although their very presence was a sign of progressiveness and they benefited from being allied to a Group so consistently in the headlines, they also remained a minority within it. While not ignored, their exhibits generally received less press attention or were favourably reviewed only in contrast to the modernist tendencies of their male contemporaries. In the first exhibition, for example, Sands' 'charming interior' was contrasted with Lewis's baffling abstraction, *Eisteddfod*. Finch had previously caused a stir at the Allied Artists' Association with a painting of a male nude with blue pubic hair so controversial that she had been forced to withdraw it, but at The London Group her *Jealousy and Indifference* was greeted as trying to be 'dramatic' and failing; and though a later nude was praised for the 'subtlety and beauty of reality',[59] still the most frequent adjective for admired work by the women painters was 'charming'. Nonetheless, The London Group remained, for the majority, their chief exhibiting platform.

During the First World War, however, when many male members were absent, the number of women exhibitors, augmented by the introduction of exhibiting rights for non-members, gradually increased. Nina Hamnett (1890–1956, elected 1917) first exhibited as a non-member in 1916 and, an exception to the rule, established a strong early presence; she was commended for her 'strenuous personalities on canvas and […] other excellent work'[60] and her 'remarkable gifts'.[61] By the second decade, Lessore and

Vanessa Bell (elected 1919)[62] began to be frequently reviewed. Indeed the *New Witness* (interestingly, the reviewer was also a woman) noted that although by 1921 the most prominent group had formed around Fry, it drew its 'inspiration' from Bell and Duncan Grant, while a second group had formed around Lessore, and a third around Robert Bevan.[63] In this climate, the exhibition-shy Dora Carrington showed once in 1920, and Marjorie Watson-Williams, later better-known as Paule Vézelay, made her exhibiting debut with the Group in 1921, showing her bold, highly-simplified linocut, *Bathers*, in 1923.[64] New York-born Jewish émigré Belle Cramer (1883–1978) also exhibited frequently with the Group during her years in Britain, after meeting Epstein, Ginner and Gilman at the Café Royal (depicted by Allinson and shown in the fourth exhibition), an informal network for many of The London Group artists.[65] In the coming decades women including Eileen Agar, Jessica Dismorr, Gertrude Hermes, Barbara Hepworth and Elisabeth Frink (1930–1993, member 1956), emerged from the shadow of the men as distinctive artists in their own right.

Fry's election and place on the hanging committee in 1917 radically changed the character of the Group by accelerating the influence of the Bloomsbury aesthetic. When the *New Witness* observed that Fry's 'angular landscapes' were 'interesting, but […] rather dull', the comments seemed to imply an inherent criticism of Fry's well-known critical role, 'somehow they seem not unlike a treatise on painting written by a learned Professor'.[66] Yet his *Portrait of Nina Hamnett* (1917, The Courtauld Gallery)[67] possibly shown in the same year, is one of his finest. By now The *Times* felt that 'the high spirits and recklessness of the new movements in art seem to have died away'; replaced by 'a rather arid aesthetic Puritanism'.[68] Pound, under the pen name B H Dias, was scathing about the lack of originality, identifying only 'the familiar patchiness, blurriness, [and] stickiness'.[69]

In contrast to the rising Bloomsbury aesthetic was the strong presence of Jewish artists within the Group, united by ties of ethnicity and friendship but not by style, treatment or subject matter. There was no manifesto for these 'Whitechapel Boys' who showed together only once in the so-called 'Jewish Section', of the exhibition *Twentieth Century*

Art: A Review of Modern Movements co-curated by Bomberg and Epstein at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in May 1914.[70] Many of them were also involved with the Ben Uri Arts Society, formed in Whitechapel in July 1915 by the charismatic Russian-born émigré Lazar Berson. Today works by Epstein, Bomberg and Gertler, Jacob Kramer and Bernard Meninsky are among the highlights of the Ben Uri collection. Kramer and Horace Brodzky (1885−1969, elected 1914) both began exhibiting with the Group as early as the second exhibition and were in due course joined by Meninsky and Edward Wolfe (1897−1982, elected 1923), who also became frequent exhibitors, their work, though less radical was often noticed in the press. Clara Klinghoffer (1900–1970), a talented young painter, taught by Meninsky and commended by Epstein, showed once as a non-member in 1919.

These two seemingly disparate groups, the Jewish artists and Bloomsbury, already had exhibiting ties: Bomberg, Gertler, Meninsky and Wolfe all exhibited with the Friday Club,[71] begun in 1905 by Vanessa Bell (as did many other London Group members); and Gertler and Wolfe also exhibited with Fry's Omega Workshops.[72] In 1919 Gertler (who shared Bloomsbury's enthusiasm for Cézanne) found his name coupled with Grant's, and praised by Clive Bell, as 'not only the best of the younger men, but with Mr. Sickert, the best painters in England.'[73] Bell's enthusiasm for Gertler was brief, however, unlike his widely-resented and consistent championship of Grant and his Bloomsbury colleagues.

In 1920 a distinctly anti-Semitic article in the *Outlook* observed that 'Race will tell in art', ascribing 'some of the characteristics' of the controversial new movements 'to the fact that they are largely in Jewish hands. Possibly I am over-susceptible on this point; but, from internal evidence, I am inclined to believe that more of our younger painters have Jewish blood than is evident in their names.'[74] Yet the modernism of the Jewish painters was equally deplored by the conservative *Jewish Guardian*, which noted in May 1920 that 'Of the inanities and insanities which compose the bulk of the show it is painful to note how woefully large a proportion are by young Jewish painters', in which the author included Gertler, Bomberg and Meninsky,[75] while ignoring the Jewish subject matter of both Bomberg's *Ghetto Theatre* (1920, Ben Uri Collection)[76] and Meninsky's

Jewish Boy. On the other hand, the *New Witness* commended the latter as 'a brilliant piece of colour' and Meninsky's *Mother and Child* (1919, University of Leeds Art Collection)[77] was also praised as 'powerful in design and colour'.[78] Elsewhere, Tatlock drew attention to Bomberg and Gertler as 'serious students of a vital tradition' in contrast to the general 'decorativeness' of English painting.[79] They were sometimes joined by non-member Jewish exhibitors, often émigrés, such as Moses Kottler (1896–1977), a South African Jewish painter and sculptor, who exhibited in autumn 1922 and in 1930 during fleeting visits to London,[80] demonstrating the Group's continued willingness to show work by non-members and also anticipating the greater numbers of artist refugees (predominantly Jewish) fleeing National Socialism in the 1930s who exhibited with the Group in the following decade.

By 1918 fewer than half the members were exhibiting. Gilman's death in February 1919 brought about the resignation of Etchells, Lewis and Roberts. Ezra Pound penned an openly hostile review of the eleventh exhibition in November 1919, 'The London Group invents nothing whatever; […] If anything accrues from them it is fortuitous by-product. Here we have a general ecole [*sic*] de goggle-woggle, cream-ice and stucco tonality; the arty, the sloppy'.[81] R H Wilenski's suggestion that in their revolt against tradition London Group members were 'building a new art',[82] sounded a rare note. The *Times*' ambiguous headline –'High average and serious experiment' – was perhaps more telling. During the hiatus in the presidency over the next two years, Bevan, former Treasurer, became the older statesman figure.

As fissures widened over the growing Bloomsbury presence, a number of rival societies arose including the short-lived Monarro Group,[83] and Lewis's brief resurrection of the Vorticists as Group X in 1920. Lewis, as ever, commanded extensive press attention, and it was felt that the Vorticist 'secession' had robbed the Group of much of its vitality.[84] Ultimately the Seven and Five Society, formed in 1919, would become a more lasting rival. Though initially lacking boldness, it became more progressive after Ben Nicholson (who showed only once at The London Group's 'dog's dinner'), joined in 1924 and re-organised the group from within.

When Fry showed André Derain around the 1919 annual exhibition, it caused friction among other members, and after accusations of favouritism, Fry withdrew from the hanging committee. The thirteenth exhibition in October 1920 took place without Bloomsbury involvement. Fry's correspondence reveals that he still considered the Group to be 'the freest and least academic group in England', but he called the replacement hanging committee a group of incompetents. This group included Nevinson who resigned in 1921 and never forgave Fry. The exhibition was a commercial flop and afterwards Bloomsbury returned to the Group with increased support. Though Fry refused the post of president he was widely regarded as the power behind the 'throne' occupied by Bernard Adeney (1878−1966, founder member 1913, president 1921–23).[85] William Roberts, a former Official War Artist, who returned to exhibit with the Group in 1922, with his exceptional theatre interior, *At the Hippodrome* (1920–21, Leicester Arts & Museum Service),[86] was the sole remaining exponent of Vorticism.

In 1921 Bloomsbury dominance was regarded as a mainly positive influence on the group's 'most active and promising members' but a note of warning was sounded that others were becoming 'fascinated – entangled'.[87] It was hoped that Maynard Keynes' preface to the 1921 autumn show, which suggested it was better to sell pictures cheap than not at all, would help to increase sales; however, the preface attracted more press notice than the pictures themselves. D S MacColl (1859–1948), painter and former Keeper of Art at the Tate Gallery, strongly objected to Keynes' assertion that the Group included 'the greater part of what is most honourable and most promising amongst the English painters of to-day'.[88] A flurry of letters to the editor followed, including one from Group member Alfred Thornton (1863–1939, elected 1924), who argued that The London Group's work was 'of serious interest in that it reflects a very deep under-current that is running in life.'[89] This fuelled a further spat between critics MacColl, Tatlock and Hugh Blaker, primarily over the influence of Cézanne,[90] although the admiration for French painting led to invitations to Maurice Utrillo (1883–1955), who exhibited with the Group in 1923, and Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), who showed in 1924 and 1926.

By 1922 critics noted that the Group was appearing 'far less revolutionary'[91] but Konody considered the standard had been 'raised rather than lowered' and that the Group was now 'the most representative body of independent artists in [the] country'.[92] Grant's cityscape *St Paul's*, was praised as 'akin to the architectural and topographical subjects of Corot's first period, so broadly and solidly handled, and yet so sensitive'.[93] The *Evening Standard* observed, however, that the Group could still 'count a sense of humour among their virtues. Perhaps the best joke at the Mansard Gallery, […] is, apart from the funny things hanging on the walls, the information in the catalogue that the portrait of Miss Harriet Cohen, by Savo Popovitch [*sic*], is priced at £150, including frame, but without frame eightpence'.[94] Serbian painter Popovic (1887–1955, elected 1922), along with the Italian Mario Bacchelli (b. 1893, elected 1922), and Russian ceramicist Boris Anrep (1883–1969, elected 1919), was part of a growing émigré presence commended, perhaps surprisingly, by the *Daily Mail*, in April 1923, which declared that the Group was 'gradually expanding and developing from a narrow coterie into an art society of international importance'.[95] The *Daily Sketch* described it, less flatteringly, as containing 'contributions by artists of as many nationalities as go to make up the average London revue',[96] although Anrep's mosaics and Lessore's ceramics were welcomed.

During this period, sculpture began to have a more articulated presence. After the early strong showing by Gaudier and Epstein, there had been a hiatus when little or no sculpture was shown. This changed under the presidencies of Frank Dobson (1924–26)[97] and Rupert Lee (1926–36)[98]. Lee began exhibiting his 'ingenious linear designs' in 1919;[99] both these and his sculpture were admired. Dobson began to show in 1922, when his work was praised as 'one of the very best things in the exhibition'.[100] By the following year, sculpture was firmly established as a vital component of Group shows and regularly reviewed. Dobson was a former Group X exhibitor and the Vorticist influence lingered in his *Seated Torso* (1923, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collection) but his classical *Cornucopia* (exhibited in the 1928 retrospective) is more typical. In 1926 Epstein received rare praise for his portrait head of a boy, *Enver*, described as 'the best that native sculpture can do in character and expression',[101] while the Russian-Canadian Jewish sculptor, Abrasha Lozoff (1887–1936), whose work

combined the disparate influences of Grinling Gibbons and Gauguin, exhibited for the first and last time. His extraordinary woodcarving *Lot and his two Daughters* (later donated by Lord Sieff to the Ben Uri Collection), was judged by the *Times* to be 'not as good as it looks, owing too much to its Far Eastern reference, though it is evidently the work of a man who knows his job';[102] although the criticism may have been provoked by the whopping £1,500 price tag. Several women sculptors also became regular exhibitors in this decade including Elizabeth (Betty) Muntz (1894–1977, elected 1927), and non-member Margaret Hayes (exhibited 1923–26).

Although in most camps The London Group continued to be seen as younger and more energetic than the NEAC, the *Times'* critic in May 1926, commenting on the Royal Academy's inability to fill the third gallery of the Summer Exhibition, swept away such divisions, suggesting that 'they […] should call upon the young lions of the New English Art Club and the London Group to splash about in it'.[103] Having drawn a clear distinction between the RA and The London Group, however, critics did not like to see this line blurred. Allinson's 'carefully accurate' *Spring in Suburbia* was criticised as being 'too near to the modernity of Burlington House to be encouraging'.[104] Throughout the 1920s, a number of stalwart contributors including the Carline brothers (Richard, 1896–1980, elected 1921; and Sydney, 1888–1929, elected 1922) became members, while individual painters including Paul and John Nash (1889 –1946, elected 1914) and Matthew Smith were also consistent and highly individual exhibitors, who added considerably to the vitality of the exhibitions. Yet by the time of its first retrospective in 1928, as the *Evening News* suggested with its damning headline, 'Back to Normal in London art, No Futurist Sensations at the New Exhibition',[105] the Group was undoubtedly tired, and much in need of the boost that it was hoped that this important anniversary would deliver.

[1] Denys J Wilcox, 'The London Group 1913–1939: Part One' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 1997), p.23.
[2] Roger Fry, 'Two Views of The London Group, I.', *The Nation* (14 March 1914), pp.998-9.
[3] The Seven and Five Society – later Seven & Five (1919−1935) was founded as an alternative to The London Group during the period of rising Bloomsbury influence. Ivon Hitchens was both a founder member and still a

member at its demise. At the first exhibition at Walker's Art Galleries in April 1920, the group printed a brief manifesto, but only became more influential with the influx of a new membership including Ben Nicholson (joined 1924, Chairman 1926), who reformed it from within, steering it towards abstraction. During 1926-30, Jessica Dismorr, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Cedric Morris, David Jones, and Frances Hodgkins all became members. Its most dynamic period was in the 1930s with four shows at the Leicester galleries; its last exhibition in 1935 at Zwemmers Gallery has been described as 'the first all-abstract show in England' with a strong presence by Hepworth, Moore, Nicholson, Piper and Penrose.

[4] P G Konody, The *Observer* (8 March 1914), p.7.

[5] See Denys J Wilcox, *op. cit*., p. 11.

[6] Robert Bevan, Renée Finch, Harold Gilman, Edward Wadsworth, Harold Squire, W B Adeney, W Ratcliffe, Spencer Gore, Sylvia Gosse, J B Manson, Charles Ginner, Thérèse Lessore, Walter Bayes, C R W Nevinson, S de Karlowska, M C Drummond, Harald Sund, Ethel Sands, Edward Wadsworth, Spencer Gore, A H Hudson, Percy Wyndham Lewis, David Bomberg, Jessie Etchells, John Nash and C F Hamilton, Jacob Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.

[7] See: The Modernist Journals Projects, a joint project of Brown University and The University of Tulsa: http://dl.lib.brown.edu/mjp/ (accessed 7.7.13.).

[8] See Wendy Baron on Spencer Gore in this volume.

[9] See Wendy Baron on Harold Gilman in this volume.

[10] Even Fry, though concluding that the first exhibition justified the Group's formation, considered that the public would find these strange bedfellows 'puzzling' (*The Nation*, op. cit).

[11] Arthur Clutton-Brock 'The Cubists' Error. Exhibition of The London Group', *The Times* (7 March 1914), p.6.

[12] Sir Claude Phillips, 'Goupil Gallery. The London Group', *Daily Telegraph* (10 March 1914), p.5.

[13] See Paul Edwards on Wyndham Lewis in this volume.

[14] P G Konody, op.cit.

[15] Unknown author, 'Shocking Art. Pictures Designed to Jolt the Senses', *Star* (1914, day and month unknown), cited Dominika Buchowska 'Around the galleries: art exhibtions in London in 1914' in *London, Modernism and 1914*, ed. M. Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.219.

[16] Cited ibid., p.221.

[17] Ibid., p.222.

[18] P G Konody, op. cit.

[19] The New English Art Club had been formed in 1886 in direct opposition to the Royal Academy. Run by artists for artists, all matters of membership and the selection of exhibits were decided by a majority vote. There was a membership fee and the Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer positions, members of the executive committee and the selecting and hanging juries were re-elected annually. See Kenneth McConkey, *The New English: A History of the New English Art Club* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006).

[20] Walter Sickert, 'A Monthly Chronicle. The London Group', *Burlington Magazine* (January 1916), in *Walter Sickert: The Complete Writings on Art*, ed. A Gruetzner Robins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.400-401.

[21] Unknown author, 'London Letters: "The Revolutionaries"', *Manchester Daily Guardian* (20 January 1914), not paginated.

[22] P G Konody, op. cit.

[23] Wendy Baron, *Perfect Moderns: A History of the Camden Town Group* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.65.

[24] 'The typical New Englander and the typical London Grouper would each be likely to accuse the other of caring nothing about colour; the simple explanation being that, with a common eye to decorative possibilities, one is thinking of colour in its atmospheric and the other in its constructive values', the *Spectator* observed as late as 1935. ('Art Exhibitions of the Year', *Art Review – A survey of British Art in all its Branches – during the year 1935*, the Artist Publishing Company, London, 1935), p.22, cited McConkey, op.cit., p.170.

[25] Epstein and Gaudier exhibited sculpture in March 1915; only Nevinson in November 1915; and only Epstein in June 1916. No sculpture was shown in the following exhibitions: 5th exhibition November–December 1916; 6th exhibition April–May 1917; 7th exhibition in November 1917; 8th exhibition May–June 1918; 9th exhibition in November 1918; 10th exhibition April–May 1919. Epstein then showed nothing until 1926; work by both Gaudier and Epstein was shown in the 1928 retrospective. Rupert Lee showed sculpture in the 11th exhibition in November 1919.

[26] P G Konody, op. cit.

[27] Fry, 'Two Views of The London Group, I.', op. cit.
[28] T E Hulme, 'Modern Art. III, The London Group', *The New Age*, Vol XIV, no. 21 (26 March 1914), p. 661.
[29] See Evelyn Silber on Jacob Epstein in this volume.
[30] *The Connoisseur*, Vol. 40 (May 1915), p.56.
[31] '"Junkerism in Art", The London Group at the Goupil Gallery', *The Times* (10 March 1915), p.8.
[32] Ibid.
[33] St John Irvine, 'The War and Literature', *The Englishwoman* (October 1915).
[34] 'Junkerism in Art', op. cit.
[35] Author unknown, *Manchester Guardian* (13 March 1915), cited Jonathan Black 'Touching Civilisation in its tender mood', in *London, Modernism and 1914*, ed. M Walsh, op. cit., p.195, n. 94.
[36] See Michael Walsh on C R W Nevinson in this volume.
[37] Frank Rutter, *Some Contemporary Painters* (London: Leonard Parson, 1922), pp.195-6
[38] Ibid.
[39] P G Konody, The *Observer* (14 March 1915), cited Richard Cork, *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009), p.171.
[40] Augustus John to John Quinn, cited Stephen Gardiner, *Epstein: Artist Against the Establishment* (London: Michael Joseph, 1992), p.140.
[41] Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, Friday morning, November 1915, in ed. N. Carrington *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965), p.104.
[42] Mark Gertler to Dora Carrington, Sunday, December, 1915, ibid., p. 106.
[43] See Sarah MacDougall on Mark Gertler in this volume.
[44] 'Puritanism in Art, The London Group', *The Times* (2 June 1916), p.11.
[45] Cited Jenny Pery, *The Affectionate Eye: the life of Claude Rogers* (Bristol: Sansom and Company, 1995), p.42.
[46] See Alexandra MacGilp on Matthew Smith in this volume.
[47] See Robert Upstone on Charles Ginner in this volume.
[48] *Evening News* (24 April 1917), London Group Press Cuttings TGA 7713.11.1.1.28.
[49] Lytton Strachey to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 3 July 1916, cited Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), p.369.
[50] St John Hutchinson to Mark Gertler, [c. November 1916], in *Mark Gertler: Selected Letters*, pp. 128-9.
[51] *Daily Chronicle* (10 August 1917), p.31.
[52] C Lewis Hind, 'A New Picture Gallery – What Youth is Painting', *Daily Chronicle* (10 May 1917), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/31.
[53] *Evening News*, op. cit.
[54] Author unknown, *Star* (26 April 1917), page unknown, London Group Press Cuttings TGA 7713.11.1.1.27.
[55] See Robert Upstone on Stanislawa de Karlowska in this volume.
[56] See Wendy Baron on Ethel Sands in this volume.
[57] Six of the seven were connected to Sickert and the Camden Town Group; only Jessie Etchells was associated with Roger Fry and Bloomsbury.
[58] They were joined by Mary Godwin (1887–1960), who had also studied under Sickert and Gilman; and in the fourth exhibition by Phyllis Barron.
[59] *The Times* (10 November 1917), p.9.
[60] Author unknown, 'The London Group', *Globe* (12 November 1917), page unknown, London Group Press Cuttings TGA 7713.11.1.1.41.
[61] P G Konody, '"Arts and Artists", the London Group', *The Observer* (12 May 1918), p.3.
[62] See Grace Brockington on Vanessa Bell in this volume.
[63] Bernadette Murphy, 'The Art of Today. The London Group', *The New Witness* (27 May 1921), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/81.
[64] See Jane England on Paule Vézelay in this volume.
[65] Born in New York, Belle Cramer (1883–1978) moved to Edinburgh in 1906 upon her marriage to Dr William Cramer in 1906, studying at the Edinburgh College of Art. They moved to London at the outbreak of the First World War because of her husband's German citizenship. Among the artistic set at the Café Royal, the Cramers met Ginner, Gilman and Epstein, commissioning the latter to create a bust of Dr Cramer; he also sculpted Belle. She exhibited with The London Group in 1917, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1926, 1929, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1937 and 1938. She also exhibited with the Royal Institute, the Royal Portrait Society, and the NEAC. Frank Rutter gave Cramer her

first solo show in his own gallery and she had six solo shows during her time in London. The majority of her London work was either destroyed during the war or abandoned when she returned to the States with her husband at the onset of the Second World War.

[66] John Salis, 'The Art of Today, The London Group', *New Witness* (15 November 1917), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/43.

[67] See Anna Gruetzner Robins on Roger Fry in this volume.

[68] *The Times* (10 November 1917), p.9.

[69] He continued, '[…] No. 52 is a sticky blur; No. 53 is a blur (greasy); 54, a blur (muddy); 55, blur (pure and simple); 56, blur (sticky); 57 is a sectionised blur leaning to the left next to Picasso; 58, a still muddier blur; 59, a blur with a glare on it; 60, patches; 62, a poster effort for Chu Chin Chow [a musical comedy], inexcusable, but tempered by the kindly chiaroscuro of the alcove. And in this manner we might continue.' B H Dias (Ezra Pound), 'Art Notes: At Heals', *The New Age*, Vol 22, no. 4 (22 November 1917), pp. 74-5.

[70] For further discussion, see Juliet Steyn, 'Inside Out: Assumptions of "English" Modernism in the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1914' in *Art Apart: Art Instituions and Ideology across England and North America*, ed. M. Pointon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 212-30; Lisa Tickner *Modern Life and Modern Subjects* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 146; and Sarah MacDougall 'Something is Happening There': Early British Modernism, the Great War and the Whitechapel Boys' in *London, Modernism and 1914*, ed. M Walsh, op. cit., pp.122-147.

[71] The Friday Club (1905-22) initially provided a platform for the artist members of the Bloomsbury Group to exchange ideas, but soon widened to include many non-Bloomsbury exhibitors, including many members of The London Group: Allinson, Baynes, Bevan, Sydney Carline, Malcolm Drummond, Frederick Etchells, Jessie Etchells, Gilman, Ginner, Hamnett, McKnight Kauffer, John Nash, Paul Nash, Nevinson and Roberts, among them. Its exhibitions were held at several small venues but primarily at the Alpine Club Gallery, Mill Street. See Richard Shone, *The Friday Club, 1905-1922* (London: Michael Parkin Gallery, 1996), unpaginated.

[72] Gertler exhibited with the Omega Workshops in 1917 and 1918. Wolfe was one of the last artists to be associated with the Omega before it closed in 1919.

[73] Clive Bell, 'Fine Arts: The London Group', the *Athenaeum* (25 April 1919), pp.241-2.

[74] The *Outlook*, 15 May 1920, cited Denys J Wilcox, *The London Group 1913-1939: The Artists and Their Works* (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1995) p. 22.

[75] *Jewish Guardian* (21 May 1920), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/75.

[76] See Sarah MacDougall on David Bomberg in this volume.

[77] See Irving Grose on Bernard Meninsky in this volume.

[78] Ivor Byrne, 'Reviews. The Art of Today. Royal Academy and London Group', *New Witness* (14 May 1920).

[79] R R Tatlock, 'Contemporary Art at the Hampstead Art Gallery', The *Burlington* 37 (September 1920), p.165.

[80] He passed briefly through London and Paris between April 1922 and January 1923. His lack of a UK reputation and the fleetingness of his visit is perhaps the reason for the omission of his given name. Kottler's bust of the South African Prime Minister Jan Christian Smuts (1949) is in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

[81] B H Dias [Ezra Pound], 'Art Notes', *The New Age* (April 1919).

[82] R H W [Wilenski], 'Exhibitions of the Week: Mansard Gallery: Eleventh Exhibition of the London Group', The *Athenaeum* (7 November 1919), p.1158.

[83] Its name a conflation of Monet and Pissarro, it held its first, well-received exhibition in 1919.

[84] See Wilcox, 1995, pp. 15-16, for further discussion.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] See David Cleall on William Roberts in this volume.

[87] Bernadette Murphy, 'The Art of Today, The London Group', *The New Witness* (27 May 1921), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/81.

[88] D S MacColl, *Saturday Review* (29 October 1921), cited Maureen Borland, *D. S. MacColl: Painter, poet, art critic* (Harpenden: Lennard Publishing, 1995), p.249.

[89] Cited Wilcox, 1995, p.238.

[90] MacColl responded with an article called 'The Nonsense About Cézanne'; R R Tatlock retaliated in the *Burlington Magazine*; and Hugh Blaker weighed in to the *Saturday Review* (19 December 1921), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/99.

[91] 'The London Group', *Sunday Times* (14 May 1922), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/81/105.
[92] P G Konody, 'Art and Artists. The London Group', The *Observer* (14 May 1922), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/105.
[93] Tancred Borenius, 'The London Group', *Saturday Review* (21 October 1922), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/132.
[94] 'The London Group', *Evening Standard* (6 May 1922) Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/81/107.
[95] 'Modernism in Art. Exhibition of The London Group.', *Daily Mail* (24 April 1923), Press Cuttings 1914–1923, London Group Loose Press Cuttings 1914–1977, The London Group Collection, TGA 7713.11.2.
[96] 'Patriotism', *Daily Sketch* (25 April 1923), Press Cuttings 1914–1923, London Group Loose Press Cuttings 1914–1977, The London Group Collection, TGA 7713.11.2.
[97] See Neville Jason on Frank Dobson in this volume.
[98] See Denys Wilcox on Rupert Lee in this volume.
[99] 'The London Group', *Manchester Guardian* (10 October 1923), Press Cuttings 1914–1923, London Group Loose Press Cuttings 1914–1977, The London Group Collection, TGA 7713.11.2.
[100] 'Contemporary Art, The London Group', *Architect's Journal* (24 May 1922), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/115.
[101] 'Pictures', *Daily Express* (9 January 1926), Press Cuttings 1926, London Group Loose Press Cuttings 1914–1977, The London Group Collection, TGA 7713.11.2.
[102] Art Exhibition: The London Group, The *Times* (4 June 1926), p. 12.
[103] Anon., 'The Royal Academy Exhibition – The Oil Paintings – Some Successes and a Limitation', *The Times* (3 May 1926), p.8, cited McConkey, op. cit., p.159, n. 91.
[104] M T H S, 'The London Group: XIIth Exhibition', *Westminster Gazette* (20 May 1920), Press Cutting Album 1917–22, The London Group Collection, Tate Archive, London, TGA 7713/11/1/1/72.
[105] 'Back to Normal in London Art, No Futurist Sensations at the New Exhibition, *Evening News* (7 January 1926) Press Cuttings 1926, London Group Loose Press Cuttings 1914–1977, The London Group Collection, TGA 7713.11.2.