



CHRIST CHURCH
OXFORD, ENGLAND.

SPECIAL INTEREST EVENT

BLOOMSBURY *AND THE* ART *OF* BEING MODERN



THURSDAY 21ST TO SUNDAY 24TH MARCH 2024

BLOOMSBURY AND THE ART OF BEING MODERN

Was Virginia Woolf right when she proclaimed that 'on or about December 1910, human character changed'? She and her fellow members of the Bloomsbury Group certainly did not lack ambition and a high sense of purpose. She made this claim in 1924, thinking about the exhibition of post-impressionist art organised by her brother-in-law, Clive Bell, and her friend Roger Fry. For the first time, Londoners had seen paintings by Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gaughin, and many reeled in horror from these dazzling attempts to capture the sensual world in paint. For Woolf, this wasn't just a revolution in fine art. It was a new way of thinking about the world where the individual consciousness mattered above all and old ways of seeing were overturned. Her husband, Leonard Woolf, later wrote that 'what was so exciting was our feeling that we were part of the revolution, that victory or defeat depended, to some extent, on what we said or wrote.'

This year's conference will take Woolf and the cohort loosely grouped around her in Bloomsbury and beyond to explore the modernist creative explosion of the early twentieth century. Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, Rupert Brook; Vanessa Bell,



Duncan Grant, Clive Bell, Roger Fry; Maynard Keynes, Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore. The Woolfs were at the centre of a group of writers, artists and thinkers who between them in the decades after 1910 did indeed transform the cultural landscape. Between them they translated and published Freud in Britain; they forged new ways of living against a background of war;

they risked imprisonment by living openly as homosexuals; they fought for ideals of internationalism that resulted in the League of Nations.

Looking across literature, fine art, music and philosophy, speakers will explore what was so radical about this moment of modernism. Was it irresponsible during the First World War to care so much about the rhythm of a sentence, the line of a paintbrush, or the curve of a chair, while young men's bodies were smashed to pieces day after day in the trenches? This was a moment when the stakes of art felt high enough that it really did feel possible that the right poem, or painting, or essay, had the power to change how people thought and thus to end the war. We'll use this weekend to revisit that moment during another era when the end of the world as we know it can feel frighteningly close.

THURSDAY 21ST MARCH

14.00 – 15.30 Registration and
Afternoon Tea

16.00 Programme Welcome

16.15 Introduction to Bloomsbury
Professor Lara Feigel

18.30 Welcome Drinks Reception

19.30 Dinner

FRIDAY 22ND MARCH

8.00 – 9.00 Breakfast

10.00 – 10.30 Morning Refreshments

10.30 Forster's Imperial Ejaculations
Professor Santanu Das

12.45 – 13.30 Lunch

14.00 Bloomsbury and Education
Dr Natasha Periyán

15.30 – 16.00 Afternoon Refreshments

16.00 Truly Many Waters: Ling Shu Hua's
Friendship Scroll
Dr Heidi Stalla

19.30 Dinner

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH

8.00 – 9.00 Breakfast

9.15 Bloomsbury and Literary Modernism
Professor Peter Boxall

10.45 – 11.15 Morning Refreshments

11.15 Purple Triangles and Other Shapes:
Virginia Woolf and the Visual Arts
Professor Alexandra Harris

12.45 – 13.30 Lunch

14.00 Afternoon optional activities

15.00 – 16.00 Afternoon Refreshments

16.30 Katherine Mansfield and the
Short Story
Tessa Hadley

19.00 Closing Drinks Reception

19.30 Gala Banquet

SUNDAY 24TH MARCH

8.00 – 9.00 Breakfast

9.30 Musical Bloomsbury
Dr Kate Kennedy

10.45 – 11.15 Morning Refreshments

11.15 Virginia Woolf and Laughter
Dame Professor Hermione Lee

12.45 Lunch

14.00 Depart



HOW TO BOOK

The programme fee is £730 per person and the en suite supplement is £100 per room. The fee includes the full lecture programme, three nights' accommodation, all meals, dinner wines and refreshments as timetabled. Gratuities are not expected.

Bookings can be made online or by phone. Full payment must be made at the time of booking. Online booking is available on the 'Visitors and Conferences' section of our website.

A full refund [subject to an administration fee] will be offered in the event of cancellations made up to and including 60 days prior to the start of the event. No refunds will be offered after this time. All monies are held by Christ Church.

Please direct enquiries to:
Special Interest Event, The Steward's Office
Christ Church, Oxford, OX1 1DP
Tel: +44 (0)1865 276174
Email: specialinterest@chch.ox.ac.uk
www.chch.ox.ac.uk/conferences/special-interest-event

FORCE MAJEURE

The College reserves the right to make alterations and substitutions to the programme. It will not be liable for any non-performance under this contract arising out of circumstances beyond its control.



Duncan Grant, View to the Barns, Charleston, 1930s © Estate of Vanessa Bell. All rights reserved, DACS 2023

THE CHRIST CHURCH EXPERIENCE

Christ Church, established by Henry VIII in 1546, is a unique foundation of college and cathedral. It is home to some 650 undergraduate and postgraduate students and over eighty Senior Members. Christ Church occupies a 150-acre site in the heart of the city, including the Meadow, a tranquil area of pasture, preserved for centuries and bounded by the Rivers Isis and Cherwell.

Lectures take place in the Sir Michael Dummett lecture theatre, located on the ground-floor in Blue Boar Quad. The lecture theatre has fixed seating with foldaway writing tables and is fitted with a sound amplification system with an induction loop for hearing-aid users.

Accommodation is located in buildings of architectural and historical interest which reflect the different centuries since the

college's foundation. Rooms are single, twin-occupancy or double-occupancy and are situated on the ground, first, second and third floors (low floor rooms are available on request). All rooms have tea and coffee-making facilities, complimentary Wi-Fi and a refrigerator. A free laundry room is also provided.

Meals are prepared under the direction of the college's Executive Head Chef and are served in the magnificent Tudor Great Hall. Dietary requirements can be catered for provided they are requested at the time of booking. Refreshments are served in the Sir Michael Dummett Exhibition Space. The Buttery Bar, adjacent to Hall, will be open at set times during the event. House wines, included in the price, will be served at dinner. Lift access is available to the Buttery Bar and Hall.



Edmund Blok

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Lara Feigel is Professor of Modern Culture at King's College London. She is the author of five works of non-fiction, including *Free Woman: Life, Literature and Doris Lessing* (2018) and *Look! We Have Come Through! – Living with D.H. Lawrence* (2022), and of one novel, *The Group* (2020). She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and reviews regularly for the *Guardian*.

Santanu Das is Professor and Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College Oxford. He is the author of *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (2005) and *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs* (2018) and is currently writing a monograph on the experience and imaginings of sea-voyages in a global context, from Victorian times to the present.

Natasha Periyán is an Early Career Research Fellow at the Institute of English Studies and has taught at several universities, including KCL, Goldsmiths and RHUL. She worked at Kent on an AHRC project on literary culture and intelligence. Currently she is writing *Virginia Woolf, Meritocracy and Literary Impressionism: A Biopolitics of Mind and Feeling*.

Heidi Stalla is a modernist scholar and creative writer at Yale-NUS College in Singapore. Her research focuses on Bloomsbury and Asian literary studies, and Twentieth Century Life-Writing. Her current project, *Spring Trees Autumn Clouds: Transnational Messages of Art and Friendship*, is an object-biography of Ling Shu Hua's Friendship Scroll.

Peter Boxall the Goldsmiths' Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford. He has published a number of books on the novel, including *Twenty-First Century Fiction* (2013), *The Value of the Novel* (2015) and *The Prosthetic*

Imagination (2020). His collected essays, *The Possibility of Literature*, are forthcoming with CUP, and he is currently writing a book entitled *Fictions of the West*.

Alexandra Harris is a Professorial Fellow in English at the University of Birmingham. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and is a regular broadcaster and reviewer. She is the author of *Romantic Moderns* (2010), *Virginia Woolf* (2011), and *Weatherland* (2015), and a forthcoming book about the history of landscape and local feeling, explored through responses to a particular place: the Arun Valley.

Tessa Hadley is the author of eight highly acclaimed novels, most recently *Free Love* (2022), and four short-story collections. In 2016 she was awarded the Windham Campbell Prize and the Hawthornden Prize. Her stories appear regularly in *The New Yorker*.

Kate Kennedy is Weinrebe Research Fellow and Co-Director of the Oxford Centre for Life-writing at the University of Oxford. She is a broadcaster and writer, who specialises in combining biography, words and music. She is a regular presenter and contributor for Radio 3, and is the author of books including *Ivor Gurney, Dweller in Shadows: A Life of Ivor Gurney* (2021) and *Cello: A Journey through Silence to Sound* (2023).

Hermione Lee was President of Wolfson College from 2008 to 2017 and is Emeritus Professor of English Literature in the English Faculty at Oxford University. She is a biographer and critic whose work includes biographies of *Virginia Woolf* (1996), *Edith Wharton* (2006) and *Penelope Fitzgerald* (2013), and *Tom Stoppard* (2020). In 2023 she was made GBE (Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire) for services to English Literature. She is currently working on a biography of Anita Brookner.



Vanessa Bell, Design for an Embroidered Stool Artwork: © Estate of Vanessa Bell. All rights reserved, DACS 2023 Photo: Bridgeman Images