



Ravishing!

A celebration of beauty in many
forms featuring the works of
Contemporary artists

Naomi Munuo,

Lucy Perry

&

Lucy Corbett

in conversation with the works of
Edward Seago, Cedric Morris and
Cecil Beaton



www.bettycharles.com

*We are thrilled to present Ravishing!
and hope you will enjoy the exhibition.*



*Our special thanks goes to Ashlee and
the team at Suffolk Nest for their
astounding display throughout the
gallery. Cecil Beaton would be proud!*

*And of course, huge thanks to our
artists without whom this show would
not be, well, Ravishing!*

*Lucy and Oliver Charles
Directors
Galerie Betty Charles*



When we hear the word "Ravishing," we think of exceptional beauty and attractiveness. It's a positive adjective used to describe something or someone that is very beautiful, captivating, or enchanting. For this exhibition, we have made a "relationship" between Edward Seago, Cedric Morris and Cecil Beaton. Three men who appreciated beauty in all forms. We have woven the works of three exceptional women artists through the works of Edward Seago from which this exhibition took inspiration.

The works of Edward Seago are very much in the tradition of English landscape paintings, influenced by Sir Alfred Munnings and Dame Laura Knight, but forging a lineage back to Constable and even to Gainsborough. Seago was born in Norwich in 1910, the son of a coal merchant. Aged seven he developed a heart complaint so, whilst bedridden for several years he took to painting scenes from his bedroom window to help pass the time. As a young man Seago had joined a circus in reaction to his childhood confinement. His connection to Bevin's Travelling Circus remained for many years. Like Laura Knight and Alfred Munnings he was attracted by the glamour and theatrical life of the circus; producing numerous works that were to culminate in two books relating his experiences and chronicling circus life: *Circus Company* (1933) and *Sons of Sawdust* (1934).

His immense interest and interaction with people from the entertainment industry including his friends Betty Fletcher and Cecil Beaton, remained a life long passion and inspiration.



Betty Astell (Mrs Cyril Fletcher)
Edward Seago
Oil on Canvas, 83 x 103 cm

In his mature paintings of “Lady Rosemary Muir (nee Spencer-Churchill) b.1929 and “Betty Fletcher (nèe Astell) 1912-2005” Seago has sought to capture atmosphere through his impressionistic style. These works are open and uncluttered, utilising the simplicity of composition and brushstroke for personal expression and conveying his emotional responses to nature, in this case female beauty.

Seago first met Cecil in the company of the artist Augustus John at the Venetian home of Lord Melchett in the early 1930's. Melchett went on to become one of Seago's most influential patrons. Cecil Beaton had been one of the original Bright Young Things, and reimagined the Edwardian grandeur of house parties with his exuberant floral creations and flower gardens at his own home Ashcombe, Beaton expertly captured the wistfulness of the fleeting nature of beauty as a reaction to the horror of the first world war with his flower gardens of floating waltz music and women in costumes of chiffon.

Ultimately, late in his career, this period of flowers and blossoms would become the inspiration for the mauve organza dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in Eliza's last appearance in the movie "My Fair Lady" (1964). Cecil was most well known as a society photographer where he put his flamboyant designs and flamboyant nature to best use. In 1937, when prince Edward, the Duke of Windsor married Wallis Simpson, Constance Spry was asked to do the flowers and Cecil Beaton was commissioned to photograph the couple for Vogue. He captured Wallis in a Surrealist gown by Schiaparelli (featuring an oversize lobster) in the grounds of the Château de Candé gazing romantically across the lake, backlit with sunshine and holding large branches of blooms.

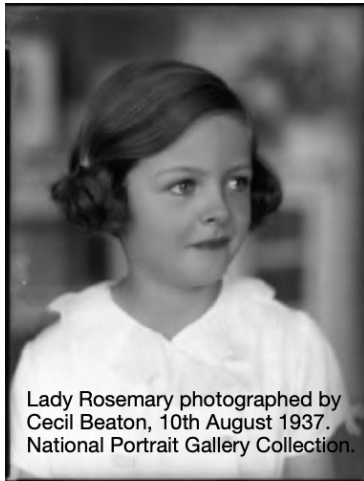
These images contrasted sharply with regular wedding photography with a freedom and spontaneity which led to Queen Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother) inviting Beaton to Buckingham Palace in 1939 to create whimsical and romantic presentations of the Queen unlike any previous royal portraits. When Cecil Beaton arrived at his appointment to meet the Queen, he brought with him a backdrop inspired by Jean-Honoré Fragonard's bucolic painting *The Swing* (1767) and an abundance of hydrangea and gladioli blooms, possibly from his own gardens.

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When Queen Elizabeth II became Queen in 1952, Cecil Beaton was well established as the Royal Photographer. He beautifully documented the coronation with his photography including a photograph of Lady Rosemary Mildred Muir (née Spencer-Churchill) whom he had first photographed in 1937 as a child. She was a



Lady Rosemary photographed by Cecil Beaton, 10th August 1937. National Portrait Gallery Collection.



(Above) *The Queen with her Maids of Honour* photographed by Cecil Beaton, 2nd June 1953. National Portrait Gallery Collection.

prominent figure in the royal social scene and served as one of the six Maids of Honour at Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. Lady Rosemary was the eldest and highest ranking Maid of Honour being the only daughter of a Duke.

Naturally Seago, with his links to the Royal Family and friendship with Cecil Beaton was the choice as portrait painter of Lady Rosemary when her family wanted to celebrate her coming of age. We suspect that this important portrait might have been commissioned when she was a Debutant.



*Lady Rosemary Muir
(née Spencer Churchill)
Edward Seago
Oil on Canvas, 83 x 103 cm
£26,000*

In this exhibition we are linking Cecil Beaton and his love for English Gardens with Cedric Morris who lived and worked at Benton End house and gardens in Hadleigh, Suffolk. Sir Cedric Morris (1889 – 1982) celebrated artist and gardener and artist, Arthur Lett-Haines (1894–1978) were lifelong partners, they met on Armistice Night in 1918. Cedric and Lett established the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing creating one of the most remarkable art schools of the period, a place ‘outside the system’. One of the first pupils was the 17-year old Lucian Freud; one of the last, Maggi Hambling. The artists were often joined by friends such as Elizabeth David, Vita Sackville-West, Constance Spry, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. While there is no documentary evidence that Cecil Beaton and Cedric Morris knew each other they certainly moved in the same circles. However, there is no doubt they both loved gardening and shared a passion for growing.

Naomi Munuo has recently been the Artist In Residence at Benton End and we look forward to seeing the works which she creates over the course of 2025. Art has been a constant companion in Naomi's life. It has shaped her experiences, passions, and creative expression. Through her art, Naomi aspires to bring the viewer into a world of vibrant colour, captivating compositions, and powerful narratives, inviting them to share in the beauty that exists in the ordinary and the extraordinary alike. One can discern her deep admiration for the 20th-century modern masters but her work undeniably embraces femininity, portraying strong female characters engaged in introspection, conversation, and everyday rituals set amongst patterned interior surfaces and floribunda.

Lucy Perry has created an installation of works, Titania's Bower, a series of floral illustrations in ink on gessoed handmade cotton rag Khadi paper. There are twelve illustrations in total; two of each of the six types of blooms that drift across the wild bank where Titania sinks into her magical slumber. These works were created as part of the development of Lucy's textile work exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington in May 2025.

Lucy Corbett, the founder of the Welsh Academy of Art, trained at the Charles Cecil Studios in Florence for three years. A move to the Brecon Beacons with her family saw Lucy begin her work as a teacher in 2012. Just two years later, she had bought an old Primary school with one of her students which has since become home to students in the locality and abroad.

Lucy's works are timeless masterpieces in their own right that are both fresh, contemporary works but with the gravitas of early 20th Century talent. Her work would not have looked out of place adorning the walls of Benton End, the Reddish House of Cecil Beaton or the aristocratic homes of Seago's patrons.

LUCY CORBETT

*I don't specialise, always
preferring variety of both
subject and genre of painting.
Inspiration arrives in its many
forms and the painting of the
day can take any shape.*



Sunflowers

Acrylic on Canvas, 91 x 152 cm

£7,500

Through my paintings I hope to champion marginalised voices and stories, celebrating the strength of women in art and society, and reclaiming their agency and autonomy. I strive to capture the complexity and depth of the female experience through gestures, expressions, and the arrangement of objects within compositions.

I explore the beauty of introspection, portraying scenes of quiet contemplation, amidst lush fabrics, intricate patterns, and vibrant colours that mirror both external surroundings and inner worlds.

I hope my interior scenes serve as sanctuaries, allowing the free exploration of one's thoughts, emotions and identities whilst viewing them.

NAOMI
MUNUO



Gigantic Courage and Strength
Acrylic on Canvas, 91 x 152 cm
£7,500

LUCY PERRY

*That feeling you get when you breathe in
sunlight and fresh air on a spring
morning, when you see new shoots
emerging lush and brilliant yellow green
from the depths of winter, when you
delight in jewel coloured flowers
gathered into bunches of glorious beauty,
when you hold a warm pebble worn
smooth by the sea - these are the feelings
that inspire me to create. These responses
to the joy of nature are what I want to
capture and evoke in my work.
Sometimes representational, sometimes
intuitive, always gestural in drawing or
brushstrokes, my paintings and prints
explore colour and pattern whilst
distilling natural forms and places onto
the surface.*

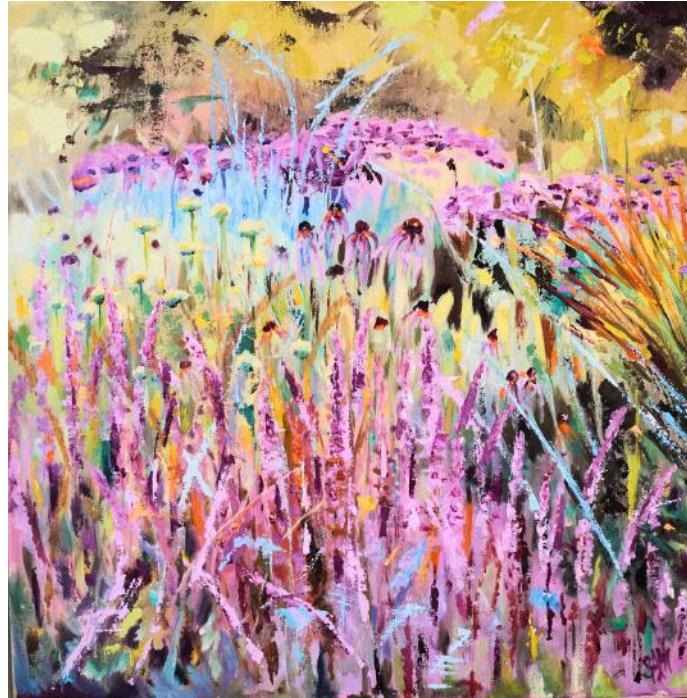




Tatiana's Bower Series:
A series of floral illustrations in ink on gessoed handmade cotton rag Khadi paper. This installation is made up of twelve illustrations depicting 2 of each of the 6 types of blooms that drift across the wild bank where Titania sinks into her magical slumber. Created as part of the development of my textile work exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington in May 2025.

Painting intuitively from observation, I am guided by a deep sensitivity to colour, light, and atmosphere. I delights in placing colours alongside one another in ways that convey not just what is seen, but what is felt—the softness of Suffolk skies, the warmth of a lived-in interior, or the joyful tangle of flowers creating their own visual feast.

SARA
MACIVER



Piet's Garden
Sara MacIver
Oil on Canvas,
£660

Edward Seago
1910 - 1974



Betty Astell
(Mrs Cyril Fletcher)



Lady Rosemary Muir
(née Spencer-Churchill)

Lady Rosemary Muir (nee Spencer-Churchill) b.1929

Lady Rosemary Muir (nee Spencer-Churchill) is the daughter of the 10th Duke of Marlborough and the most senior Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth II on her coronation in 1953. She was the highest ranking of the women chosen to be a Maid of Honour to the Queen as she was the only daughter of a Duke. Their silk Norman Hartnell gowns, finely embroidered with floral embellishments were exquisite. In recent years, the dress belonging to Lady Muir has been restored, the final result brought the original wearer to tears as she reflected on such a splendid part of her youth. Another of the Maids of Honour, Lady Glenconner quipped that they were the “spice girls of their day”. Well known in their aristocratic circles, they suddenly became household names, their pictures featuring in every magazine and newspaper that covered the Coronation from first preparations to the inevitable media storm that a royal celebration incurs.

As the niece of Sir Winston Churchill and having been bought up at Blenheim Palace, large parties filled with important, aristocratic and royal attendees, the coronation was not as intimidating as it might to the general onlooker. Lady Muir married Charles Muir just two weeks after the Coronation, an event attended by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret.

Betty Fletcher (nee Astell) 1912-2005

Born Elizabeth Astell, Betty as she later become known, started her career as a performer early. By twelve, she had sung on the BBC before training as a dancing reappearing in one of the first ever BBC television transmissions. At 16 Astell made her debut on the West End stage in a play called, *Escape*.

She continued to appear on the BBC, throughout the 1930s in what become her signature look, a black satin dress with white spots. The Baird Company made 30 minute transmissions on the BBC which always included Astell performing with many of the “names” of the era. At this point, she was also making the transition from the small screen to the silver screen whilst maintaining her connections with the stage as well.

In 1940, she met her husband-to-be Cyril Fletcher and entered her final decade of performing on screen. Her final film, *A piece of Cake*, in which she appear along side her husband, was released in 1948. By 1950, she had almost entirely moved to the writing and production side of the theatrical arts, starting an internment agency creating performances for which she wrote, produced and starred.



Rivière Tranquille
Edmond Marie Petitjean
Oil on Canvas
£9,750

Edmond Marie Petitjean (1844 - 1925) exhibited at the Salon in 1874. Exhibiting at the Exposition Universelle from 1881, Petitjean became a member of the Society of French Artists in 1883. Petitjean was awarded the “hors concours” and silver medals in 1884 and a silver medal again in 1889. The Legion of Honour came in 1892 and a gold medal in 1900. He went on to become a member of both the jury and the Committee of the Artistes Français.

Petitjean was predominantly a painter of landscapes and seascapes that capture a moment of every day life. They record places and ways of life that, often, have been lost to mechanisation, gentrification and technology. His treatment of the natural world is portrait-like, giving a sense of the character of the region and space to which he transports us.

Petitjean’s work can be found in both public and private collections across France, Britain and America.



Beaulieu Sur Mer
Gabriel Deschamps
Oil on Canvas
£14,500

Born Marcel Dreyfus (1899-1985), Dyf was followed closely behind the artist he most admired, August Renoir. Dyf came across his work at an early age, eventually making the move to Arles in 1922. Thus, Dyf settled into his practice, eliding the painterly techniques of Renoir with in the Dutch masters, Rembrandt and Vermeer in whom Dyf had begun to explore. Although he travelled extensively, it is his french landscapes he is best known for, particularly those captured in Provance, Brittany and Ile de France.



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