

# THE FLAGSTAFF



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## Gladys Hynes' 'Morning' (c.1916)

In December 2019, an unrecorded painting by Gladys Hynes (1888-1958) (see Front Cover) appeared unexpectedly at a Paris auction house. Formerly part of the collection of Impressionist and Modern art of the Petit Palais in Geneva, the museum had deaccessioned their one British work – a painting by an obscure woman artist about whom very little information was available. Entitled *Morning* and dated to around 1916, the painting depicts six female bathers at Lamorna Cove. As such, *Morning* belongs with a series of paintings produced by Hynes in the 1910s and 1920s in which the landscape of Western Cornwall forms the backdrop.

Hynes was born in Indore, India, in 1888, one of six children of Edith (née Power) and Harry Hugh Hynes, an agent with the Bank of Bombay. At the age of three, Hynes moved with her family to London, later attending Brangwyn's London School of Art, where she found herself amidst a group of lively and intelligent young students, including the painters Nina Hamnett and Annie Walke (née Fearon), who would remain life-long friends. On the death of her mother in 1911, Hynes moved with her family to 'Penmorvah', a Victorian town house at 61 Alexandra Road in Penzance. She enrolled at the painting school in Newlyn founded in 1899 by Stanhope and Elizabeth Forbes, whose teaching advocated the 'plein-air' traditions of French naturalism. Described by her fellow student (and future brother-in-law) C. E. Vulliamy as 'the most beautiful as well as the most promising student' at the school, Hynes threw herself wholeheartedly into the lively artistic colonies of Newlyn and Lamorna, becoming part of an important influx of 'second generation' painters, including Laura and Harold Knight, Dod and Ernest Procter, Gertrude and Harold Harvey and later Cedric Morris and Lett Haines. Around 1912, Hynes moved to a tiny studio above the infant school in Newlyn, which had famously provided the setting for Frank Bramley's *A Hopeless Dawn* (1888, Tate Gallery). Vulliamy recalled his frequent visits to Hynes' studio, where he saw pictures 'done with oil paint on strawboard' as well as paintings that were 'beautiful and mysterious'. Although this was clearly a prolific period of creativity for Hynes, only four paintings from her Cornish days are known to have survived: *Morning* (c.1916), *Chalk Quarries* (1917), *Noah's Ark* (1919) and a single, later work, *The Fowler* (c.1932). Working alongside other Newlyn artists, she also produced a wooden panel for the choir stalls of St Hilary's church in Marazion, depicting scenes from the life of the 12th century Cornish Saint Morwena.<sup>1</sup>

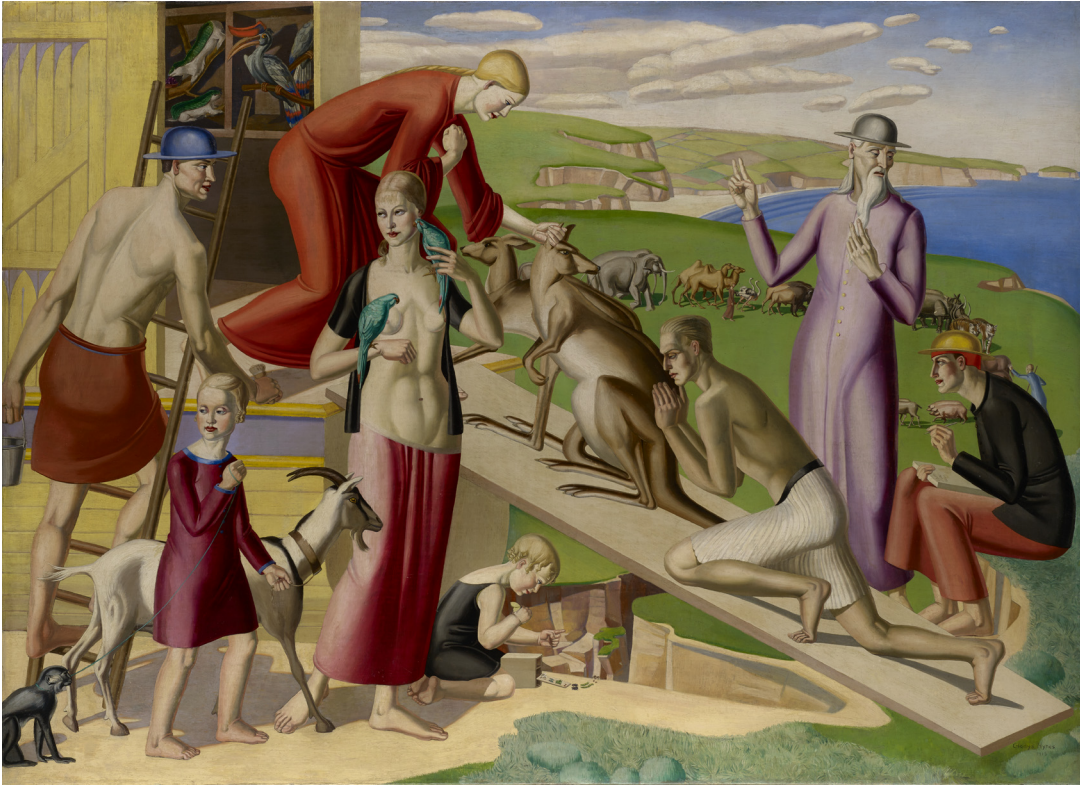


Gladys Hynes *The Fowler* (c.1932)  
oil on canvas 61.3 x 51.4 cm (The Wolfsonian FIU)



Gladys Hynes *Chalk Quarries* (1917)  
oil on panel 122.6 x 98.1 cm (The Wolfsonian FIU)

<sup>1</sup> Caroline Fox, in her book *Painting in Newlyn 1880-1930* (The Barbican Art Gallery: 1985) further lists a painting titled *Cornish Wrestlers*.



Gladys Hynes *Noah's Ark* (1919) oil on canvas 107x147 cm (Private Collection)

*Morning* is the earliest of Hynes' Cornish paintings, and is stylistically situated between *In the Park* (1912) – a conscious attempt to represent a London scene in the contemporary post-impressionist idiom – and *Chalk Quarries* (1917) (see p.16), in which emphasis is given to an underlying geometric structure. A nascent version of this reductive aesthetic is already apparent in *Morning*. Indeed, Vulliamy noted Hynes' interest in 'Cubism', describing her paintings as 'stylisations of characteristic form'. *Morning* therefore connects closely with the artistic tendencies of the second generation of Newlyn painters whose work Walter Langley described as 'strong' and 'virile' and having 'a decided effect'.<sup>2</sup>



Gladys Hynes *St Morwenna* (St Hilary Church)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Caroline Fox (ibid) p.36.

In *Morning*, the distinctive, sweeping curve of Lamorna Cove with its precipitous granite cliffs forms a sheltering arm, protecting the bathers from prying eyes. Rather than a faithful and accurate rendering of the coastal landscape, as in Samuel John 'Lamorna' Birch's *The Rocks at Lamorna* (Penlee House Gallery & Museum), Hynes has delineated the shoreline as schematic and static, the sense of atmosphere and space surrendered to flat bands of colour. The confined sky and high horizon typify all of Hynes' Cornish pictures, which are marked by a pastoral stillness and idealised calm – the high vantage point giving the viewer the sensation of observing the scene from below. The sea, like an enormous, darkened mirror, is motionless, the thin garlands of ocean-foam providing the only sign of agitation.

While the first generation of Newlyn painters typically portrayed the Cornish coast as a productive place of people's daily toil (see for example Stanhope Forbes' *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* (1885, Plymouth Museums) or Walter Langley's *The Breadwinners, Newlyn Fishwives* (c.1895, Penlee House Gallery & Museum), the second generation found inspiration in Cornwall's pools and rocks, cliff tops and ocean views – as the perfect setting for youthful fun and freedom. In *Morning*, Hynes has portrayed Lamorna Cove as an idyllic space of leisure. Six women – idealised embodiments of youth, health and purity - emerge from an early morning swim, their streamlined black bathing suits – (of the type described by Virginia Woolf in 1909 as 'bi-sexual') - suggesting a modern active aesthetic. Indeed, Laura Knight, who lived at Lamorna, described how the 'cliffs, rocks and sea were fine to paint with figures bathing and swimming in the pools or dressing and undressing'.

The shoreline, however, was more than just a playground and a social space. Hynes described how she loved to lie all day on the cliffs looking out to sea, which was 'smooth and glittering...and lovely as a dream'. Indeed, in *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840* (1989), Alain Corbin refers to 'coastal reverie' to invoke the experience of the ocean as a place where people could 'foster daydreams about merging with the elemental forces', and 'to discover who they were'. In *Morning*, each bather appears lost in her own personal state of wonderment; heads are bowed, backs are turned, eyes averted – the spectator is invited to partake in this ritual communion with nature.

In her painting, Hynes shows an awareness of the grandes baigneuses of Renoir, Gauguin, Monet and Cézanne, but the artist she seems closest to in spirit is Georges Seurat, whose work was also an inspiration to other Newlyn painters, especially Dod Procter. *Morning* not only replicates the same palette - pink, burnt orange, black, red and fawn – as Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières* (1884, National Gallery), but it also shares the same feeling of frozen melancholia and composed grandeur. Hynes has also set up a dialogue with Piero della Francesca, especially discernible in the pose of the figure in pink, whose smooth spinal curve echoes the figure disrobing for baptism in Piero's *Baptism of Christ* (c.1448-50, National Gallery). As such, Hynes, a practicing catholic, imbues her composition with a religious symbolism, the public bathing spot of Lamorna Cove evoking the baptismal waters of the River Jordan. Many years later Hynes would refer to Cornwall as 'holy earth' which had 'enough natural beauty for all but the greedy'.

The arrangement of the bathers is carefully controlled and choreographed, rather in the nature of a stage setting. Due to wartime restrictions - the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA), which forbade artists to paint out-of-doors, was strictly enforced in Cornwall – it is highly likely that Hynes painted *Morning* from the tranquility of her Newlyn studio, where she called on her artist-friends to model. The figure drying her hair bears a striking resemblance to Gluck (née Hannah Gluckstein) who had moved to Lamorna in 1916.<sup>3</sup> (Hynes appears to have included a still-life of flowers by Gluck in her painting *Private View* of 1937.) The figure dressed in orange is a portrait of Nina Hamnett, Hynes' friend from the London School of Art, whom she later described as 'a brilliantly gay and very talented creature - and one of the most shapely our creator ever produced'. With a nod to Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c.1485-6, Uffizi Gallery), Hynes has transposed her own features onto the principal figure, with the kind of witty exuberance that artists are likely to conjure up in their youth. Certainly, it was not unusual for painters to include themselves as the central protagonist – as in Winifred Knights' *The Deluge* (1920, Tate) – when conceiving ambitious figure compositions.

While, at first glance, *Morning* can be read as a form of hymn to the joys of sea-bathing, Hynes was painting the composition when the nation was in the midst of the First World War. This would prove to be an agonising period of loss for Hynes; her brother Patrick was killed in 1916 in an aeroplane crash while her brother Hugh would succumb to the symptoms of shellshock. Typical of an iconography that would increasingly characterise Hynes' work, *Morning* challenges the viewer to look beyond the fantasies of a traditional idyll to a more contemporary (and darker) reality. Will the men, so markedly absent from the scene, ever return to their native land? As the critic Charles Marriott wrote in 1917, despite the 'decorative treatment' of Hynes' paintings, they had 'the bite of life, and of modern life' which produced 'an effect of deliberate awkwardness'.

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<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Ruth Guilding for drawing my attention to this.

During the war, Hynes commuted to London to work for Roger Fry's Omega workshops, joining an itinerant population of female labourers who translated Omega designs onto textiles, ceramics and furniture. She loved the time she spent in London, where she stayed with Nina Hamnett and frequented the bohemian milieu of the Café Royale. In 1917, she wrote wistfully to her sister Eileen of 'the green beauty and placid stagnation of Cornwall' and how she felt as if she 'had been suddenly poured into a mould that is too small for me and that it must burst'. Following the death of her father in 1919, Hynes set up her studio permanently in Hampstead where she would embark on the next stage of her remarkable career. Cornwall, however, would always remain close to her heart and she frequently returned there to paint and sketch. In 1956 she wrote to her friend, the poet Ezra Pound, that 'the Cornish...know and value beauty – and so they should for they are surrounded by it. Rock, and sea, and sky, a rather barren land, but with a lone beauty'.

**Sacha Llewellyn**

## Laura Knight's Two Models called Dolly

### Part Two – Dolly Henry

The tragic tale of the murder of artist model, Dolly Henry, by her artist lover, John Currie, who then shot himself, has always aroused interest, but the emergence on the market of new works featuring Dolly over the past couple of years has meant that this sad story of a fatal attraction has received renewed publicity recently.

Both versions of Laura Knight's autobiographies describe how she first met Dolly Henry, not long after Florence Munnings' suicide. Following the suicide, and Laura's vain attempts to get Florence to drink an emetic made from yellow mustard mixed with water, Laura and Harold went to stay at Dozmary Pool with the Napers. The two versions of Laura's meeting with Dolly are:

1. *Harold and I spent most of July month, 1914, with our friends in camp on the moor. Soon after we returned home, one of the most desirable models, a girl whose mass of fair hair matched our sunflowers, came from Newlyn asking for work.*<sup>4</sup>

2. *On returning home, we found a model waiting in our garden. She looked a sunflower herself among the sunflowers. I engaged her at once. While we were working she told me of her terror of a painter called Curry (sic), staying at Newlyn – "I know he is going to try and kill me again; he has tried to do so before", she said, and I thought she was talking sensational nonsense.*<sup>5</sup>

Laura completed at least two paintings of Dolly at this time - *Marshmallows* and *Rose and Gold*. If Laura only knew Dolly for a few weeks in 1914, she certainly became very attached to her and kept *Rose and Gold*, blaming herself for being partly responsible for Dolly's death. She added, *Nearly fifty years later, her brother wrote to me here in London, asking if I had any record of her beauty. I still own a portrait of her when posing surrounded by flowers growing in our Lamorna garden. He brought his wife to my studio to show her this work; we then spent a painful hour together.*<sup>6</sup>

### **Dolly's real name and early life**

At the time of her murder, Dolly is recorded in the newspapers under various names – Dorothy Henry, Dorothy O'Henry, Dorothy Eileen Henry and Dorothy Eileen O'Henry. According to Kate Henry, Dolly's mother, Dolly's real name was Dorothy Henry, but she did not like this so she used to sign her name as Eileen Henry.

Dolly was born in 1893 to Thomas and Kate Henry. Thomas (b.1858) was a commercial traveller specialising in clothes and furs, whose career was cut short by a stroke. He came from Boyle, County Roscommon. Thomas married Kate Gould in 1879 and, by 1881, they lived in Burlington Road, Colchester with Kate's widowed mother, a laundress and had a 2 month old daughter Annie. By 1901, when Dolly was seven, the family had moved to 20, Kendall Road, Colchester. By 1911, the Henry family lived at 15, Lisle Road, Colchester, and her mother Kate had given birth to eleven children, eight of whom were still alive. Living at 20 Kendall Road with Henry and Kate were Dolly's eldest brother Jack (aged 22) (Stage Manager), Stephen (aged 14) (apprentice motor worker), Delia (aged 12), Frances (aged 10), Helen (aged 9) and Ronald (aged 3). By this time, 17 year old Dolly had left home.

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4 Laura Knight, *The Magic of A Line*, 1965 p.148.

5 Laura Knight, *Oil Paint and Grease Paint*, 1936 p. 203.

6 Laura Knight, *The Magic of A Line*, 1965 p.148.