



In the late 1920s, the British artist Cyril Power set out to depict London's Russell Square Underground Station. His initial sketches evolved into a graphic composition: steps spiral around a central column like a vortex and shadows are luminously rendered in bright yellow and blue. It's an image that owes its energetic aesthetic to the Grosvenor School of Modern Art, a radical institution founded by artist Iain MacNab in 1925. At his handsome Pimlico townhouse, students captured the changing face of interwar Britain with dynamism and colour. They focused on printmaking – linocuts in particular.

"They were working in a modernist idiom, inspired by things like sports and new technologies," says Ella Ravilious, a curator at the V&A and co-author, with her former colleague Gill Saunders, of upcoming book *Linocuts: A History*. Linoleum – first developed in the 1860s as cheap, durable flooring – was a fitting material to capture their "utopian, forward-looking vision".

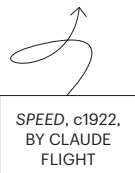
"It has always been seen as a humble medium, associated with children's art," says Saunders. The design is gouged into a soft linoleum block; ink is then rolled onto the raised surfaces and imprinted onto paper. Early experimenters included Wassily Kandinsky and Hannah Höch,

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but for a long time linocut prints "came really low down in the artistic hierarchy", adds Saunders. Before the Grosvenor School disbanded in 1940, it started to change this.

Today, editions of Power's *The Tube Staircase* (1929) are owned by The British Museum and The Met; in 2024, Bonhams sold a version for AU\$34,440 (about £18,025). According to Tania Sutton, director of London's Osborne Samuel Gallery, an exceptionally rare linocut in excellent condition might sell for as much as \$175,000, but smaller-scale works by "lesser-known" artists can be found for around £1,000, says Jennifer Strotz, a specialist in prints at Sotheby's. Pieces by Ursula Fookes, Edith Lawrence, Gladys Hynes and Dorrit Black can be "just as vibrant" as the school's established names, she adds.

One of the movement's key figures was Claude Flight, who taught at the school from 1926 to 1930. He created his own linocuts – from swirling London street scenes to kaleidoscopic compositions of dancers – and encouraged students such



SPEED, c1922, BY CLAUDE FLIGHT

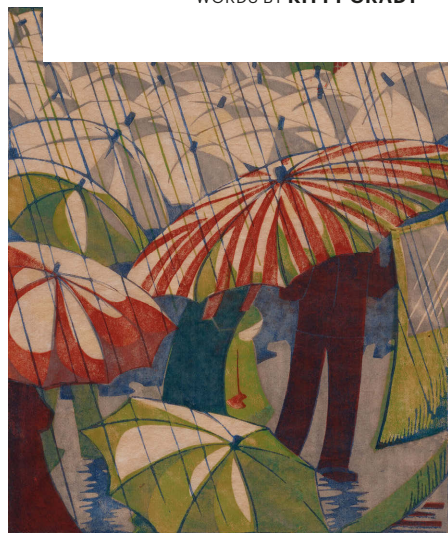


VISUAL ARTS

GROSVENOR SCHOOL LINOCUTS

The London institution's interwar prints have found a new fanbase

WORDS BY KITTY GRADY



Above: *Wet Afternoon*, 1929, by Ethel Spowers. Below: *Fixing the Wires*, 1932, by Lill Tschudi



WHERE TO BUY

Bonhams bonhams.com
Frieze Masters frieze.com
Lyndsey Ingram lyndseyingram.com
The Old Print Shop oldprintshop.com
Osborne Samuel Gallery osbornesamuel.com
The Redfern Gallery redfern-gallery.com
Sotheby's sothebys.com

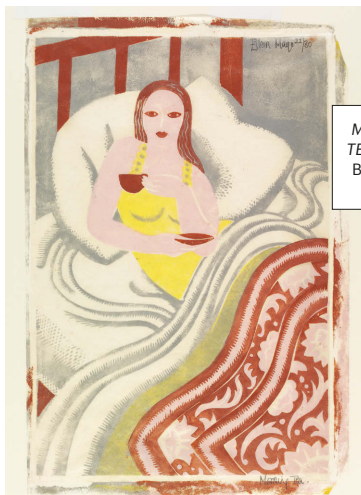
WHERE TO SEE

The Met metmuseum.org
V&A vam.ac.uk

WHAT TO READ

Linocuts: A History by Ella Ravilious with Gill Saunders (Thames and Hudson, available from 1 October)

Top: *The Tube Staircase*, 1929, by Cyril Power. Above: *Summer* from the series *Four Seasons*, c1926, by Claude Flight. Below: *Racing*, 1934, by Sybil Andrews



MORNING TEA, c1930, BY EILEEN MAYO

as Power, Sybil Andrews and Lill Tschudi to embrace the form. In 1929, he staged the *First Exhibition of British Lino-Cuts* at The Redfern Gallery in London – with prints priced between one and three guineas (equivalent to around £85 to £260 today).

"A central aim of the Grosvenor School was to create works that were worthy of dedicated exhibitions but at a price working people could afford," says London gallerist Lyndsey Ingram, who bought a complete collection of 232 Grosvenor School works in 2025. Next month, her booth at Frieze Masters will be dedicated to Women of the Grosvenor School. It includes Andrews' *Rush Hour* (\$42,000), depicting an abstract trio of commuters in flaming orange and blue, and Ethel Spowers' *Wet Afternoon* (\$55,000), showing a crowd of umbrellas being dashed by rain.

"The Grosvenor School contains many of the 20th century's pioneering female artists," says Strotz. Some focused on more typically "feminine" subject matters: children or pastoral scenes. "But it wasn't like the women were doing flowers and animals and the men were doing racing bikes and fast cars," says Ingram, referencing Lill Tschudi's *Fixing the Wires* (1932), which depicts workmen on telephone poles.

IN THE 1930S, EXHIBITIONS of the Grosvenor School's work toured Australia, Canada, America and China, and their appeal continues to be global. American collectors Leslie and Johanna Garfield amassed over 700 modern British prints and drawings in their lifetime, including many by the Grosvenor School: some were donated to The Met; 45 were offered by Sotheby's across several sales in 2023 and 2024. Spowers' *Tug of War* (1933) and Power's *Lifts* (c1930) sold for \$15,240.

"I've dealt in prints by Matisse and Picasso, and those by the Grosvenor School stand up in terms of quality," says American gallerist John Berggruen, who owns four examples, such as *Racing* (1934) by Andrews. Art adviser Anna Kirrage, whose collection includes Power's *The High Swing* (c1933) and Andrews' *The Windmill* (1933), adds that work coming to the market represents "an opportunity to buy a historical piece of British art that you can be confident will retain value over time".

Peripheral figures are also of interest to collectors. Eileen Mayo, for instance, was a life model who was "taught to linocut by Flight over the phone", says Ravilious.

Collectors and dealers are unanimous that the Grosvenor School linocuts – printed on fine Japanese

paper – must be experienced in the flesh before purchasing. "They are very intense," says Richard Gault at The Redfern Gallery. "The colour reflects through from the back, which creates a kind of stained-glass effect." Ravilious and Saunders suggest visiting the V&A where Power's *The Tube Staircase*, Flight's *Speed* (1922) and Mayo's *Morning Tea* (c1930) can be viewed upon request. "There's a freshness to their work that still resonates," says Ingram. "They are of their time but also timeless." ■HTSI