

Thomas Monnington

FOR EVELYN MONNINGTON

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Sir Thomas
MONNINGTON
1902–1976

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME

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Acknowledgments

This is the first major exhibition of Thomas Monnington's work since the Memorial Exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1977. It is a tribute to Judy Egerton that twenty years on her catalogue still stands as the principal source of information on Monnington's life and work, and we gratefully acknowledge our debt to her. However two things have changed in the intervening years which lead us to feel that the time is now right for a fresh assessment: first, a number of key early works, which have seldom if ever been exhibited before have recently come to light – most particularly *The Farmstead* (2), *Winter* (3), *The Wine Press* (6) and *The Annunciation* (15) – and secondly perceptions of the relevance of different works and styles of painting from the earlier decades of the century have radically altered. We are also fortunate to have been able to secure two important works – *The Supper at Emmaus* (72) and *Tempests attacking Flying Bombs* (92), which were not available for the 1977 exhibition. The discovery in Monnington's studio of the original cartoon for the St. Stephen's Hall mural, and two large-scale studies for the Bristol ceiling, has also made it possible to give an impression of two of Monnington's most substantial decorative schemes from opposite ends of his working life.

Paul Liss, The Fine Art Society and the British School at Rome combined together in 1995 to mount the popular and pioneering exhibition of the work of Monnington's first wife, Winifred Knights, so it is both appropriate, and a pleasure, to work together again, and to be able to present

the other half of this remarkable couple of Rome Scholars. This time it is an added pleasure to have the help and co-operation of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the help of many people, but four in particular are due very special thanks: Evelyn Monnington, John and James Monnington and Nicholas Bowlby. The organisers would also like to extend their grateful thanks to Tommaso Astolfi, Jacopo Benci, Ruth Bubb, Emma Chambers, Professor Luciano Cheles, Dr Judith Collins, The Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Robin Chessex, Christopher Date, The Rev. Richard Davey, Brendan Flynn, Antony Griffiths, Martin Harrison, Alistair Hicks, Richard Hodges, Gordon House, Alison Jacques, Kevin Jones, John Keyworth, W. B. (Peter) Lowe, Rosamond Malpas, Mr and Mrs Christopher Monnington, Michael Moody, Martin Palmer, Cassy Payne, Alan Powers, James Rawlin, Jim Rose, the staff of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Jayne Shrimpton, Mary-Anne Stevens, David Storey, Daniel Simon, Dr Sam Smiles, Fay Squire, Quentin Stevenson, Helen Valentine, Elisabeth Vellacott, Patrick and Mavis Walker, Angela Weight and Canon Alan Wolstencroft. We would also particularly like to acknowledge the generous support of the Elephant Trust, Sir Christopher Hogg, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Christopher Monnington and John Monnington.

Paul Liss · Andrew McIntosh Patrick · Andrew Wallace-Hadrill

Introduction

PEYTON SKIPWITH

I have never liked what I have done enough to look at it and I think good artists study what they have done.

Tom Monnington quoted in the *Sunday Mirror*, 16 April 1967

Modesty, generosity and charm are the characteristics most frequently recalled by those who knew Tom Monnington, yet he was also something of an enigma: a man of the people, who was an intellectual; an artist of innate ability who was full of doubt and self-questioning, and a painter obsessed with science. To many of his contemporaries his work appeared to vacillate between direct interpretations of nature and pastel-coloured geometric abstracts. On a superficial level he had a charmed life – Rome Scholar at the age of twenty one; married to the beautiful and much courted fellow-scholar Winifred Knights; elected Associate of the Royal Academy at twenty nine, before he had ever exhibited a work there. He went on to become the nineteenth President of the Royal Academy in December 1966, defeating two distinguished figurative painters – James Fitton and Carel Weight – at the third ballot, not, one suspects because his work was more highly rated by his fellow Academicians than theirs, but because they recognised that his unique abilities would best serve the Academy. Quentin Crewe writing in the *Sunday Mirror*, shortly before the opening of the 1967 Summer Exhibition, described the differences between Monnington and his immediate predecessors: 'They were flamboyant. He is modest. They were bigoted and stubborn in their traditionalism. He is confident but moderate in his progressiveness.'¹ He also quoted the new President as saying: 'We want to help people to apply the same judgment to abstract painting for instance as they

give to representational work.' A couple of weeks later Terence Mullaly, reviewing the Exhibition, came out with a more brutal but at the time widely shared opinion: 'The President is indeed a charming man but his work is an embarrassment. I can only recommend it to some linoleum manufacturer.'²

During the inter-war years and on up to the late 1950s there appeared to most people to be an unbridgeable divide between representational (traditional) and abstract (modern) art. The 'modern movement' itself was an Utopian crusade and its protagonists were intolerant of accepted values. By an accident of history the Royal Academy became the refuge not only for those artists – painters, sculptors and architects – who wished conscientiously to carry on practising in the academic tradition, but also for those reactionary figures to whom the merest hint of modernism was anathema. Under threat they blustered and swore, and in so doing isolated the Academy from the intellectual mainstream for a generation. The Academicians' choice of Monnington, even by the narrowest of margins, was a sound one, though there is a certain irony in the fact that it was two octogenarian architects – Sir Edward Maufe and Vincent Harris – who boasted of having swung the vote. Monnington was too intellectual to be a painters' painter, and as Lawrence Gowing noted, he was as much at home with architects and engineers as with artists.³

But what of Monnington the painter? What was it that

led this young man with the seemingly charmed life, classically trained under Tonks at the Slade, to develop into a painter of geometric abstracts? And given this development, why was he a pillar of traditional culture rather than an advocate of the avant garde? How, at the end of the century, twenty years after his death, and only five short of his centenary, should we view Monnington's work and assess his place in twentieth century British art? David Storey, a former pupil, has referred to Monnington's 'struggle with 'modernity' and the seeming irrelevance, qua 'modernism' of his own extraordinary gifts ...'⁴ That there was an unremitting logic to Monnington's development has become clearer with time: a logic both perverse and deeply unfashionable, but which led this intellectually-minded classicist not only to become an abstract painter, but also to remain firmly within the academic tradition and aloof from 'modernism'. Monnington came to abstraction by his own path via Quattrocento Italian painting and science, and he came to it relatively late. Although undoubtedly aware of the work of Ben Nicholson and others during the 1930s, he did not share their particular intellectual pursuits. It was only in the post-war years – after a prolonged period of artistic impotence – that he was stimulated again; this time by discussions with Sam Carter, Professor of Perspective at the Slade and the challenge of the Bristol ceiling. It was then that he found his own distinctive vision and voice. However, the proof of the integrity of this vision and of his often solitary quest is how good his works, particularly the geometric abstracts, now look, twenty years after his death.

Monnington's work was firmly rooted in an intellectual discipline instilled by Tonks and nurtured by his years in Italy. Commenting on the fact that until the end of his life he was to keep a reproduction of one of the figures from the Arezzo frescoes always hanging in his house, Judy Egerton notes that: 'Underlying Piero della Francesca's work was

his belief that aspects of nature are most easily intelligible in art if rendered in simple and regular forms of geometry, and by control of perspective. 'Measurement, which we call perspective' he maintained in his treatise *De prospectiva pingendi*, was one of the three principal parts of painting (the others being drawing and colouring). Monnington's admiration for Piero della Francesca was to inform all his own future work, including his abstract designs.'⁵ His early works, *The Wine Press* (cat.no.6), *Allegory* (see cat.nos.18–36) and the Italian landscapes need no explanation, they are an accepted part of the Slade School/British School at Rome ethos, which he shared with his wife, Winifred Knights, Colin Gill, A. K. Lawrence and others. The commission in 1925 to paint one of the large decorative panels in the Palace of Westminster was a dream come true, and a logical next step for an ambitious young painter whose Rome Scholarship had been awarded for 'Decorative Painting', as were the slightly later commissions for the Bank of England. But where to go from there? The ruthlessly pure academism which he shared at this point with Meredith Frampton, Gerald Brockhurst and a few others was very much of its period; a valid diversion, but its repetition could only result in sterility. Monnington's realisation of the difficulty of finding a way forward is emphasised by the fact that when he was elected as RA he chose as his Diploma Work, *Piediluco*, (cat.no.42) painted in Italy some thirteen years previously, but, as Judy Egerton states, he had 'already turned from such crystal-clear visions of landscape to the task of deliberately obscuring landscape's appearance from the air.'⁶ By the end of the 1930s Monnington had given up painting and, with the approach of war, gratefully turned his mind and intellect to the problems of camouflage.

Happily, alongside his mural commissions, the young Monnington had also received several portrait commis-

sions including one in 1932 from the Contemporary Portraits Fund to draw the Nobel Prize winning scientist Sir Joseph Thomson (cat.no.166). Thomson had discovered the electron as a constituent of the structure of matter, and it was he who stimulated Monnington's interest in nuclear physics. It was not until 1943, when he applied to become an Official War Artist, that he was for a time able to overcome the blockage that had caused him to give up painting. By then he had become deeply interested in aerodynamics, and had over six hundred hours of flying time under his belt, which had stimulated his fascination with the aspect of land as seen from the air. Geometry and design had become increasingly important to him; he loved drawing radar aerials and aeroplane wings, which he appreciated not only aesthetically but for their importance and relevance to the modern world. As with Piero della Francesca, so with aeronautics, it was the excitement and the discipline which attracted him; he got so deeply involved that Barnes Wallis even asked him to help improve the design of a new bomber. It is the combination of these disciplines which gives us the clue to Monnington's later work; it also explains why, despite his adoption of an abstract vocabulary, these late paintings remain more closely related to the academic tradition than to 'modernism.'

Lawrence Gowing describes Monnington as a compositional master in the tradition of the great Tuscan and Umbrian fresco painters and quotes John Lessore, a former pupil, as saying: 'If anyone ever understood composition, he did, and so drawing, the volume and movement of which he explained geometrically, not in terms of measurement and surface realism: the appearance was always subordinate to the underlying structure ... Every pencil mark tells us a bit more about this unique character, the extraordinary originality of his mind; every period of his life – the Slade, Italy, the early portraits and murals (House

of Commons, Bank of England), the ceilings, the Stations of the Cross, the abstracts, every period makes its own contribution. Only in this way can we grasp the size of his mind and how it evolved and absorbed such an astonishing range of experience, art and life, all perfectly connected and related.'⁷ Apart from John Lessore, Lawrence Gowing, Judy Egerton and David Storey, few others saw, even twenty years ago, quite how perfectly connected and related Monnington's work really was. To most, as his younger son James says, his father's later abstracts were 'not immediately accessible to those who did not share his intellectual concerns with balance and perspective.' (p.19). Gordon House, who, as a young artist and designer, was responsible for many of the Academy's publications during the period of Monnington's Presidency recalls that 'for him the Golden Mean of Piero della Francesca reconsidered with the experience of the 20th century had brought him to the fringe of modernity. He spoke to me of the 'magic section' and had obviously taken in Ghika's *Dynamic Symmetry* without missing along the way Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*.'⁸

Monnington's austere intellectual approach, combined with his innate modesty, did not make it easy for his contemporaries to perceive the underlying importance of his work, but time has been kind to him. The ceilings at Bristol and Exeter have matured well – unlike the earlier St. Stephen's Hall – and can safely be hailed as twentieth century masterpieces, and the studies for them, prepared with the precision and patience of a master, appear today both strong and vital. Enduring qualities. Monnington, himself, did not perceive any discrepancy between these geometric works and the landscape and tree studies that he continued to do until the end of his life. His enduring preoccupation with Cézanne related not only to the Provençal master's geometrical analysis of natural forms, but also to his

custom of returning again and again to familiar subjects in the constant expectation that repeated attempts at depiction would lead, through persistence, to an ideal solution. As Monnington said 'Surely what matters is not whether a work is abstract or representative, but whether it has merits.'⁹ Monnington's work has merits, even if it has taken until now for us to be able to appreciate fully the connec-

tion and relationship between his early classic and later scientific approach. Being detached from both the reactionary and the avant garde in the aesthetic debates of his day he satisfied neither, but through quietly and modestly pursuing his own chosen path he achieved a synthesis that makes him stand out today as one of the unsung heroes of his generation.



Tom Monnington, John Skeaping, Barbara Hepworth and Winifred Knights in the courtyard of the British School at Rome, circa 1925

REFERENCES

- ¹ 16 April 1967
- ² *Daily Telegraph*, 28 April 1967
- ³ Quoted in 'Monnington: The Teacher and the Man' by Lawrence Gowing, in *Drawings and Paintings by Sir Thomas Monnington PRA, 1902-1976*, Royal Academy of Arts, 1977
- ⁴ Letter to Paul Liss, 1996
- ⁵ Royal Academy of Arts, *Monnington 1977*
- ⁶ *Ibid*
- ⁷ Gowing, Royal Academy of Arts, 1977
- ⁸ Ms sent to Paul Liss, September 1996
- ⁹ *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 May 1967

Tom Monnington: Remaking a Picture of English Art

ALAN POWERS

Where should Monnington's paintings hang in a gallery devoted to twentieth century British painting? The Tate Gallery has hung his best-known painting, the 1925 *Allegory* in several contexts, as part of 'Stanley Spencer and his School' and as part of 'Realism and Narrative'. Monnington's abstract paintings would not fit into either of these categories. If the Tate wished to hang one, it would presumably go between Ben Nicholson, Victor Pasmore and Bridget Riley. Like Pasmore, Monnington's career is divided between early figurative work and later abstraction. Nicholson, for all his propagandising for abstraction in the 1930s, also moved often across this line. As the darling of such elderly academics and pedagogues as Henry Tonks and Charles Ricketts, the young Monnington, seven years junior to Nicholson, belongs in a different parallel stream, both younger and older simultaneously, an artist who never sold a work through a commercial gallery and exercised his influence through teaching not polemic. He simply does not fit the existing picture.

The Monnington memorial exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1977 made an even-handed showing of the apparently disparate parts of his art. At that time, the imaginary figure compositions of his early years were remote from current art practice and the Tate *Allegory* had not been exhibited for many years. Art appeared to be following a progressive path, typified in the Perceptualist theories of Sir Ernst Gombrich, in which the end-point had been reached at which abstract painting was accepted as

normal and painting itself was now the object of challenge.

It took another ten years for any serious alternative to this picture to become visible in painting and criticism. The launch of *Modern Painters* in 1988 is a convenient marker. Alternatives took many forms, from reactionary market-led realist art, to the serious conservatism of Peter Greenham's Royal Academy pupils, to the wilder reaches of political and social interpretation offered by 'New Art History' and the popular, challenging, figurative work of young painters in Glasgow. It would not be hard to make parallels between the media success of a young artist like Stephen Conroy and the young Monnington, both launched during periods of economic boom and social insecurity. Monnington returned to public view when the *Allegory* was hung in John Christian's exhibition *The Last Romantics* at the Barbican in 1989 and since that date it has reappeared in several rehangs at the Tate, its unique qualities setting it apart from every context in which it is placed. Twenty years after Monnington's first retrospective, he has become a more understandable figure.

The first time I heard Monnington's name was at Kettles Yard. Jim Ede owned a study for *The Annunciation* (cat. no.16) which was not hung in the house but was available for loan to undergraduates. It was the only work of its kind in the collection. I had never seen anything else like it and although Monnington was PRA at the time his work was not generally known. Ede (born in 1895) and Monnington met, one assumes, sometime during the years 1919 to 1921

when both were at the Slade. They travelled in Italy together, but Ede's awakening to other possibilities in art took place in 1924 when he met Ben and Winifred Nicholson and several major Parisian artists. In 1926 his old allegiance was represented by the publication of his book, *Florentine Drawings of the Quattrocento* and by the purchase of Monnington's *Allegory* for the Contemporary Art Society, but in the same year he bought the collection of Gaudier-Brzeska sculptures and drawings and there was almost no further contact with Monnington,¹ dutifully executing his commissions for St. Stephen's Hall and the Bank of England, which belonged on the other side of a barrier from Ede's new world.²

There are more ways of crossing this barrier to unite the two sides than the conventions of history and criticism have traditionally allowed, however.

– NORTH AND SOUTH –

A yearning for the south is typical of Monnington and Ben Nicholson alike. The south is the land of light and clear form, of natural gesture. It is the actual and metaphysical realm portrayed in the writing of their contemporary, Adrian Stokes, whose memory of his first morning in Italy is as classic a moment of Mediterranean awakening as Monnington's *Allegory*, 'On waking in the morning, I saw through the open French windows, over the top of a russet-red villa with green shutters, the Mediterranean, the place-name of our civilisation. There was a revealing of things in the Mediterranean sunlight, beyond any previous experience; I had the new sensation that the air was touching things; that the space between things touched them, belonged in common; that space itself was utterly revealed.'³

This is the experience of north meeting south, essential from Winkelmann to Kenneth Clark, with Ruskin, Pater and Berenson in between. In Monnington's great painting,

however, the figures are actual bodies, not idealised forms. The awareness of separation from the south gives the painting its poignancy. As with Nicholson's paintings, it is about love for a woman and the sense of physical well-being, made vivid by an awareness of passing time and fragility.⁴

– FLORENCE AND VENICE –

For Northerners coming to Italy, as for the Italians themselves, north and south are represented respectively by Florence and Venice. Florence, in Vasari's account, represents drawing, intellect and structure. Venice represents paint, sensuality and improvisation. Monnington's orientation could be dated to August 1923 when he decided to abandon copying Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love* for the Rome Scholarship and chose instead an early 15th century fresco of the Entombment in Spoleto.

In fact, his love, from childhood, was Piero della Francesca, situated culturally and geographically between Florence and Venice. In this, he was, at first unknowingly, taking part in a powerful movement of taste in his lifetime. Kenneth Clark opened his monograph on Piero of 1951 by remarking on the quiet revolution by which the artist known to the Victorians but little regarded by them, had in the age of Cézanne and Seurat, when artists were looking 'not for fantasy but for order; not for grace but for solidity', had taken his place on a 'New Olympus'.⁵ The first substantial book on Piero is that by Roberto Longhi, published in 1927. As if to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the subject, Clark's book is dedicated to Henry Moore.

– ART AND CRAFT –

The Slade School training which Monnington experienced and the Rome Scholarship whose ethos was so closely related to the Slade are indications of the high value placed on craft skills in painting. Sir William Rothenstein, who

gave Monnington his first teaching job, at the Royal College of Art, after his return from Rome, believed that painting was built on 'intellectual as well as technical precision.'⁶ Compared to his contemporaries Rodney Burn and Robin Guthrie, Monnington displays precision in both kinds that makes his early work convincing. In his own line, the only contemporary to surpass him was his wife, Winifred Knights.

The process of Monnington's paintings is made transparent, often by their being unfinished. In this he resembled his wife, for whom unfinishedness went beyond circumstantial causes to become a form of aesthetic. To many of Monnington's contemporaries, the preparation for painting (to take the title of Lynton Lamb's book of 1954), was more rewarding than the finished product. The *Allegory* is not just one painting in the Tate Gallery, but a group of perhaps fifty works, composition studies, painted details and cartoons. Even the 'finished' painting draws the eye with its ellipses. As Judy Egerton describes it, "'left" spaces at once lighten the composition and intensify its enchanted air.'⁷

– RENAISSANCE AND MODERNISM –

In leaving the *Allegory* unfinished, Monnington showed an awareness that to finish the picture would have been to diminish its imaginative quality. A Victorian academic painter would have worked up all the areas of the canvas at the same time. Perhaps the narrow compass of tempera led to Monnington's particularisation of detail, but there must be further significance in the way that the lake, hills and trees are picked out in detail while much of the figure painting is left unbegun. It belongs not to a continuation of Victorian classicism but to the Modernist aesthetic of the fragment, in which citations and references from genuine or recreated ancient sources, such as one finds in the Cantos of Ezra Pound, offer simultaneously proximity to

the past and distance from it by a process of disjunction. This was a poetic response to the fragmentary quality of the originals. It was Sigismondo Malatesta's failure as an Empire-builder that, in Pound's account, made the achievement of the Tempio in Rimini so moving.

Monnington's *Allegory* exemplifies his honest understanding of the limitations of art. These made difficulties in his life and limited his output as painter. His official paintings at St. Stephen's Hall and the Bank show that completion can lead to a deathly finality and although he could have continued comfortably painting these official pieces, he chose not to, and entered instead a significant period of artistic silence, painting no works of the imagination after the completion of the *Supper at Emmaus* (cat.no.72) for Bolton Parish Church in 1931.⁸ This, in its way, was a Modernist strategy of refusal. It was clearly not an easy one. In July 1943, Monnington (aged 42) wrote to his friend, Lord Balniel (later the 28th Earl of Crawford and 11th Earl of Balcarres), 'I don't suppose you know of a job for an old man like myself. Interest (apart from painting which I do not believe I shall ever be able to do all day and every day) any form of social work which will be a step to assuring that the next 20 years will not be like the last 20 years.'⁹ Luckily, Monnington found that he could return to painting, moreover to a kind of painting that departed logically but unexpectedly from his previous position.

– FORM AND CONTENT –

Monnington's paintings are classical in their objectivity. His 'subject' paintings are extraordinarily 'abstract'. However moving or evocative they may be, they are generalised statements. An 'abstract' such as the Bristol Council House Ceiling, the first indication of his new post-war direction, is, on the other hand, quite specific in its content, concerning Electronics and Physics.

It was through his craftsmanly interest in radar and aeroplanes that Monnington worked his way back towards painting. The Bristol ceiling which marked his metamorphosis into an abstract painter was largely governed by considerations of making, responding to the challenge of working in situ in tempera on such a large scale. This, and the ceiling of the Mary Harris Chapel at Exeter University, 1956, are sensitive and intelligent responses to the difficulty of making monumental architectural paintings in the later twentieth century. Their use of geometry offers a rare mediation between art and science, returning to the spirit of the quattrocento, and, in the case of the chapel, offers a pictorial form embracing all faiths without loss of symbolic strength. The latter work has an immediate effect which conceals the soundness of its foundations in practice and experience. It could be seen as a commentary on the statement of Proclus that 'Space is nothing other than the finest light'.¹⁰

– SYMBOLISM AND THE SACRED –

In 1957, Monnington wrote of the *Allegory*, 'I am no more able to explain its exact meaning now than I was at the time I painted it. The whole design certainly had a very particular meaning and purpose and was an attempt to express in pictorial form my attitude to life – almost my faith.'¹¹

The painting belongs in a broad category of works of art of the 1920s that were religious in intention without necessarily any specific liturgical or narrative content.¹²

Monnington went on to paint other, more specifically religious paintings, including the *Supper at Emmaus* and the *Stations of the Cross at Brede*. Taking these with the Exeter ceiling, one finds three very different approaches to the problem of religious paintings, one narrative and fully pictorial, the second semi-abstract and the third completely so. These differences do not, however, imply any disunity

of intention, nor are these 'sacred' works essentially different to the sensual delights of the *Allegory*. The *Stations at Brede* are a fascinating return to the Futurist's search for a visual structure to depict movement, modified by a limited illusionist depth like a bas-relief. Their web of lines and concave surfaces resembles Paul Nash's wood engravings for the Nonesuch Press *Genesis*, 1924.

The strength of these works, as compared to more conventional church art, is in their classicism. This was the alliance sought by Maurice Denis, who, in a series of essays and reviews still little-known in England, revealed the spiritual content inherent in the symbolist movement of the 1890s and in his own work, led a recreation of liturgical art. It is significant of our construction of history that Denis has been seen as a fleeting avant-garde figure who abdicated from the progressive movement in art. At least he did so in a highly coherent and articulate manner which has unexplored implications for our understanding of the twentieth century art.¹³ Denis's essays, collected in *Théories 1890-1910, 1912*, help to reintegrate the apparently sundered pieces of Monnington's career. 'Les Arts à Rome ou la méthode classique', 1896, is a locus for the ideas explored so far in relation to Monnington. In this essay, Denis defines Symbolism as 'a truth confirmed at the same time by tradition and experience'. He defends an idea of classicism, threatened by a new sensuality, as architectural, intellectual and formal. This is analogous to the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church, and Denis concludes, 'the classical Tradition in its entirety, through the logic of its efforts and the grandeur of its results, is in some manner parallel to the religious tradition of Humanity.'¹⁴

'De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme', 1909, makes the additional connections between the intellectual and spiritual concept of classic art and the practice of mural painting. Denis emphasises the importance of art educa-

tion in an age of change, even if it is only as something against which to react. Intelligence and clarity are exalted and Gauguin's statement 'Do what you like so long as its intelligent' makes stylistic relativism a matter of personal responsibility.

These statements may take us through Monnington's painting and drawing to the areas of his life which cannot be represented in an exhibition, his teaching and his presidency of the Royal Academy. It is a pity that we do not have a text from Monnington to place beside Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, for, like Reynolds, he embraced a European understanding of art's importance. As PRA, he has been almost forgotten in popular memory but when the post-war history of the Academy is written, Monnington will surely emerge as a pivotal figure in the transformation from an essentially private to a public institution. As a teacher, only those with direct experience can speak with authority. As John Lessore wrote for the 1977 catalogue, 'If anyone ever understood composition, he did, and so drawing, the volume and movement of which explained geometrically, not in terms of measurement and surface realism: the appearance was always subordinate to the underlying structure. The quality that set him apart as a teacher was sympathetic insight. He knew exactly what you were after and clarified your path according to your vision, not his.'¹⁵

Monnington still has much to teach us, including the rearrangement of our imaginary museum of English art, in which he should no longer be a marginal figure.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Contact between Ede and Monnington was only reestablished in 1972 when Tom and James Monnington visited Ede at Kettle's Yard.
- 2 Documents in Monnington's file in the British School at Rome archives reveal that Ede opened negotiations for the picture early in 1925 when it had hardly been begun.
- 3 Adrian Stokes *Inside Out*, 1947, p. 32.
- 4 Norbert Lynton, in Ben Nicholson, 1993, is the first writer to attempt a personal and psychological explanation of Nicholson's work, e.g. pp. 83-91. I believe that this approach could be taken much further.
- 5 Kenneth Clark, *Piero della Francesca*, Phaidon 1951 (new edn. 1969), pp. 9-10.
- 6 Public Record Office Ed. 24.1595. Rothenstein to H. A. L. Fisher, 22 March 1920.
- 7 Royal Academy of Arts, Monnington 1902-1976, p. 26.
- 8 This statement needs to be qualified. Monnington painted an Annunciation for Sir D. Y. Cameron to put in the church at Kippen, near Stirling and an altarpiece for Sir Herbert Baker for Church House, Westminster, 1939, now lost.
- 9 20 July 1943. Crawford papers, National Library of Scotland, 101/61.
- 10 Proclus, *Elements of Physics* 1.42a, quoted in Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, [1927], translated by Christopher S. Wood, New York 1991.
- 11 Quoted in Tate Gallery *The Modern British paintings, drawings and sculptures*, 1964, p. 443.
- 12 In a recent programme on Radio 3, Michael Oliver argued for an understanding of Stravinsky's work of the 1920s as based on Russian Orthodox rhythms and harmonies.
- 13 See Iain Gale on the Maurice Denis exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery, *Independent* 25.4.95: 'Perhaps the clearest indication that Denis's art can no longer be dismissed as reactionary lies in comparison with that of Matisse. Quite apart from theoretical writings, telling affinities exist in their work ... an exhibition that offers a seductive alternative history of the progress of Western art to a world blinkered by formalist precepts and the jaundiced legacy of a tired modernism.'
- 14 Maurice Denis *Théories 1890-1910*, Paris 1912, [4th edn. 1920, p. 56]. My translation.
- 15 Quoted in 'Monnington: The Teacher and the Man' by Lawrence Gowing, in *Drawings and paintings by Sir Thomas Monnington PRA, 1902-1976*, Royal Academy of Arts 1977, p. 15.

Tom Monnington Recalled I

JOHN MONNINGTON



Monnington on his election as PRA

The photograph shows Monnington in his studio at Leyswood, 1966. The painting on the easel is probably *Design on Diagonal of a Square*, exhibited at the Summer Exhibition 1966 (515); other studies include *Deposition (Brede)*, *Design for the Staircase of the British Museum*, and designs for the Bristol Ceiling.

I find it impossible to write a rounded and complete appreciation in just a few paragraphs so, for this reason alone I will concentrate on a very limited account of my father's life and character.

All his life he was beset by a firm belief that nothing of any value could, or should, be achieved without tremendous effort. This caused him to expend a great deal of mental and physical energy not only on his painting but on everyday matters – even the simplest correspondence required several drafts. The effect of this was to cause him to oscillate between periods of quiet elation and bouts of depression and consequent despondency about his abilities as an artist. During my lifetime, I don't think that he ever felt totally happy with any of his major creative efforts. His primary concern throughout my youth, in the 50s and 60s, was the effort of teaching painting to students who were, in the main, unsympathetic to his perception and beliefs: the vital importance of a skilled hand and a searching eye. This feeling of impotence was, I think, fundamental to his gradual metamorphosis from figurative painter to his later state as a creator of complex spatial designs. Perhaps this was an attempt to grasp an insight into the newer idiom of the artist at the time; thus to resolve their expressions by simplification into a form with which he could properly relate.

His concern with the structure of painting, which he presumably absorbed in his youth from the works of his Quattrocento favourites, became almost a latter-day obses-

sion. Gradually he transformed the structuralism within his work from being a framework, around which he could work, to a point where his overwhelming concern with the spatial structure of the subject became the painting itself. This metamorphosis was achieved over a long period – perhaps 20 years; in the course of which he carried out a number of major works: the Bristol Council Chamber ceiling and the Mary Harris Memorial Chapel at Exeter were both completed during this period. These big works took a heavy toll on his reserves of intellectual and nervous energy, and for long periods he was unable to find a path forwards. During this period also he was frequently diverted by his duties on the many committees on which he served – the National Art-Collections Fund, and the British School at Rome especially absorbing an inordinate amount of time. These administrative and diplomatic duties made exceptional demands, but I think it can be said that he enjoyed exercising his proven ability to persuade and motivate others.

Not until, as a complete surprise, he was elected PRA was he able to resolve these doubts about the direction of his efforts. As PRA he found a cause to which he could devote all his convictions and, at the same time, satisfy his creative urge. His inborn ability to work with people at all social levels, perhaps aided by his mildly Fabian beliefs, quickly established him as a rejuvenating and much respected President. Moreover, due to his all absorbing efforts on behalf of the Academy, he was able to forget to some extent

the worries and doubts he had carried unresolved throughout his years of teaching at the Slade.

I have, so far, made no reference to his domestic life, which was a counterbalance to his somewhat tormented life as an artist. His home, created by my step-mother, Evelyn, was a protective haven which restored his energy and gave him the strength needed to keep faith in himself and his work. He loved the truly rural life at Leyswood and was, I suspect, never happier than when working at some strenuous project in the garden with the help of neighbours and friends. While working with such close acquaintances he was able to exchange thoughts and percep-

tions on many subjects which were far from his own immediate concerns, and his interest in literature and scientific matters was profound and far ranging.

As a father he was quite outstanding, both by example and by gentle persuasion. It was his initial infectious enthusiasm for flying and, in particular his genuine hope that something should be learnt from studying bird-flight, that caused me to adopt my eventual career as an engineer. I am constantly aware that I was incredibly fortunate to have enjoyed my childhood as the only son of two artists. My one regret is that I never properly expressed my gratitude during his lifetime.

Tom Monnington Recalled II

JAMES MONNINGTON

For an open, warm and affectionate man Tom kept his painting very much to himself, and his studio was remarkably inaccessible even to the family. Separated physically from the house, communication, when Tom was painting, was usually by telephone and visits, whilst not unwelcome, were not particularly encouraged.

During the last ten years of his life – when I was between 14 and 24 – I felt that Tom's real work and his real attention was directed towards the Royal Academy and, in a sense, his painting was an extension of his responsibilities at the RA, as he confessed to a sense of duty as President to produce at least one significant work each year for the Summer Exhibition. Tom's studio works of this period were non-representational, undertaken in muted shades and not immediately accessible to those who did not share his intellectual concerns with balance and perspective.

I preferred Tom's 'recreational' drawings in note books, sketch pads or even backs of envelopes, reminiscent of happy days out to the Cuckmere or to Newhaven, or of holidays on the Donegal coast, Dorset or the North of Italy. These drawings of trees, rocks, beaches or churches seemed an integral part of his 'persona' and reflected his keen interest in the world about him and the acuteness of his observation.

The Ceiling for the Conference Hall of the new Council House, Bristol 1953-56

JUDY EGERTON

Monnington began designs for the Bristol ceiling in 1953. They occupied him for over a year. The first problem was to create the impression of space and depth over a flat surface of huge dimensions (approximately 95 x 45 feet, or over 4,000 square feet, it is one of the largest painted ceilings in the country, and one of the few painted direct onto plaster). This problem Monnington resolved as Piero della Francesca might have solved it, by a design whose perspectives are governed by geometry and whose forms are irradiated by subtle effects of light. But the subject-matter, inconceivable in the quattrocento, belongs to the nuclear age. Monnington himself said that he had no wish to imitate the ceilings of the Italian masters, and was 'very reluctant to get involved in an imitation of nature.' A suggestion by the Bristol city fathers that he should do, 'something connected with the Merchant Adventurers,' fell on deaf ears. Monnington determined that his design should instead commemorate those scientific achievements which future Bristolians would associate with the mid-twentieth century, and which he himself had become excited by over the last twenty years - modern nuclear physics, which Thomson had first elucidated for him; electronics, which had enthralled him first in the shape of radio masts and later in radar equipment; aeronautics, whose laws he had begun to comprehend during the war; and biochemistry, where enlarged photographs of recent research revealed amazing quasi-abstract patterns.

The design was worked out on geometric principle gov-

erned by the proportions of the room, which is a double square. What appear to be beams or struts divide the ceiling into a series of geometric shapes - octagons, rectangles, lunettes, and corner squares. Seemingly high above these beams are the elements of the design: a central spherical shape representing the earth, whirling in an atmosphere which includes not only other planets but is now seen to include electrons orbiting round the nuclei of radio-active atoms. Four corner squares symbolize developments in nuclear physics, electronics, aeronautics and biochemistry. The colours are muted. Only the beams are opaque; the rest of the design, painted in subtly graduated shades of ochre, light red, umber and blue, gives an effect which is mystic and ethereal, like the coming of Neptune in Holst's Planets suite. But the overall effect of Monnington's design compounds the music of the spheres with the rhythm of modern machines which measure their activity.

The ceiling itself took two years to paint. Scott Medd, one of Monnington's former RA students, was his chief assistant; John Monnington, his elder son, helped to mix the size and the paint. The technical problems, the need for detailed planning and the team-work greatly appealed to Monnington's temperament. They were able to start work in April 1954, while the plaster was still green, and in a slightly spongy state, which Medd recalls as wonderful to work on. First the entire ceiling was sized with calcium and rabbit-skin glue, brushed on in two directions. A platform was erected over the entire ground floor, some six feet

below the ceiling. Then, from Monnington's detailed and precisely-measured working drawings, the design was laid out – using string rubbed with charcoal: laid over props between the platform and the ceiling, then pulled tight, it snapped against the ceiling to leave an entirely accurate straight line (distrusting ready-made straight edges, Monnington laid out all his designs in this way, using string bought from a ships chandler). When they saw the first diagonals thus imprinted from corner to corner of the vast hall, Medd recalls, they knew that they were really in business.

The medium of the Bristol ceiling is tempera. The colours were ground and mixed with an emulsion of eggs, chalk and water. Bristol's Clerk of the Works delivered baskets of eggs daily. Only small quantities of paint could be mixed at a time: it soon lost its virtue, and began to smell evilly. Rapidity and continuity of work were essential; tempera dries within minutes, making it practically impossible to merge colour or to correct a mistake ('One dud stroke', Monnington had commented when painting *Allegory* thirty

years earlier, 'might necessitate repainting a whole area'). While they were painting, the artists camped out in an empty room in the Council House; Monnington insisted on a routine of starting work at 6 am and going to bed at 9 pm. The platform prevented any chance to judge progress at ground level; only for the final stages of detail were mobile scaffolding towers used. Vision was restricted to a small area around the brush, the head always upwards. The physical exertion was considerable, especially as Monnington was still teaching on Mondays and Tuesdays at the Slade, then working the rest of the week on the ceiling. But he and Medd were in the highest spirits throughout. The ceiling of the adjoining Council Chamber, designed by John Armstrong, incorporates sailing ships and symbols of Bristol's history such as the slave trade. Monnington and Medd took a lordly attitude to the fact that it was painted in the artist's studio in Cornwall and delivered in a van in ten-foot strips, to be rolled onto the ceiling with adhesive. But Monnington had driven himself too hard; in 1956, before the ceiling was finally completed, he suffered a heart attack.

Extracted from *Drawings and Paintings by Sir Thomas Monnington PRA 1902–1976*, Royal Academy of Arts, 1977

The Ceiling of the Mary Harris Memorial Chapel of Holy Trinity, University of Exeter, 1956–7

W. B. (PETER) LOWE

The Mary Harris Chapel ceiling presented Tom with problems. There were nine separate areas – eight of which sloped – and four alcoves to consider, plus the concrete collar at the top of the walls.

In the centre of the important central section, a circle was drawn with diameter equal to the central section's width – on this was drawn a square. The diagonals of this square were rotated to mark off points on the sides of the central section. These were joined to form two rectangles – and the diagonals of these were rotated. In this way the design grew towards the East and West ends of the Chapel and as far as the alcoves. A kind of simple modular harmony was established to provide support for the web of light – and it extended down the sloping areas and to the ends of the building. Shapes grew out of this geometric beginning in a logical way.

When Tom visited Exeter Cathedral and saw the relationship of arches and vaulting behind the High Altar he was fascinated. He had already established something similar in his design – and this similarity grew in the final execution.

The ceiling of the Mary Harris Chapel consists of red

cedar planks with uniform gaps between them. Its was hoped that the eye would not notice the gaps. Oil paint was chosen as the medium. The cedar was sealed with a special paint – followed by several undercoats – and a final coat that was able to take watercolour. Before the oil paint was applied the whole design was carried out in a monochrome watercolour (cat.no.136). We were reluctant to cover this up because it looked enchanting. The problem with oil paint is its tendency to look heavy in a ceiling and its habit of reflecting light in an unpredictable way. To counter this the colours are very light in tone and the ridges that oil encourages were brushed out to form a matt finish.

Apart from all the problems of organisation and design – Tom had an additional worry. He had to entrust the execution of his brilliant idea to others. His health at that time was not robust and he was discouraged from climbing ladders. Much of the paint was mixed by him – down below on trestle tables. It was ladled onto saucers and applied for the most part with varnish brushes. Tom was meticulous and supremely skilful and bore the responsibility of a large endeavour lightly – and he was endlessly entertaining all the time.



Winter, 1921-22
Oil on canvas, 122 x 216cm / 48 x 85in - cat.no.3
Sacha Lewellyn and Paul Fife



The Wine Press, circa 1923
Egg tempera on canvas, 101.6 x 150.2cm / 40 x 59 1/2 in · cat. no. 6
Private Collection



The Annunciation, circa 1924/5
Oil on canvas, 99 x 145cm / 39 x 57 in · cat. no. 15



Allegory, 1924-6
Tempera on canvas, 125.7 x 276.8cm / 49½ x 109in.
Tate Gallery, London ©

(18)



Piediluco, circa 1925
Oil on panel, 43.2 x 61cm / 17 x 24in - cat. no. 42
Royal Academy of Arts, London ©

(29)



Helford looking towards Porth Navas, Cornwall, circa 1933
Oil on canvas, 51 x 81 cm / 20¹/₄ x 32 in - cat. no. 83
Mr and Mrs Christopher Monnington



Tempests Attacking Flying Bombs, 1944
Oil on canvas, 90.1 x 120.8 cm / 35¹/₂ x 47¹/₂ in - cat. no. 92
The Imperial War Museum, London



Design for the Conference Hall ceiling,
Council House, Bristol, circa 1953
Tempera over pencil on a gesso ground,
76.3 x 193.1cm / 30 x 76in - cat.no.129



The Mary Harris Memorial Chapel of Holy Trinity,
University of Exeter, 1956
Photograph of the completed ceiling
Oil on cedar, 112 x 28 ft



Design for the ceiling of the
Mary Harris Memorial Chapel, 1956
Oil on board, 43.7 x 122cm / 17 1/4 x 48in
cat.no.134

Catalogue

PAUL LISS

Unless otherwise stated, all works are from the artist's estate and are for sale through The Fine Art Society in association with Paul Liss.

* Denotes the work is illustrated in colour

This catalogue is indebted to Judy Egerton's entries for the 1977 Royal Academy exhibition: *Drawings and Paintings by Sir Thomas Monnington FRA (1902-1976)*, hereafter abbreviated to: *Monnington 1977*.

Note on media: Monnington's favourite medium for drawing was chalk. He brought stocks of sanguine back from Italy, and also used brown, red and black conté. An extremely fine line which looks like lead pencil is often in fact the fine edge of chalk. Sometimes he drew over chalk drawings with a quill pen, his favourite quills being those Lord Crawford abstracted for him from the House of Lords. Cat. no.73 is an example of his liking sometimes to mix various media: in this case, chalk, crayon, watercolour, bodycolour and final touches of pencil. Monnington's favourite medium for decorative paintings was tempera.

THE SLADE

- 1 *Landscape with horse, circa 1919*
Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 46 cm / 16 x 18 in
The Slade Prize subject for 1919, to which this painting probably relates, was *Reconstruction: Horse and Cart*. Monnington clearly intended to include a cart, hence the forward stance of the harnessed horse. The meticulous observation of the landscape, especially the painting of the tree, and the inclusion of the shed which became a recurrent motif in Monnington's work, are forerunners of his later work.
- 2 *The Farm Stead, circa 1920*
Oil on canvas, 112 x 91.5cm / 48 x 36in
This painting was probably Monnington's entry for the 1920 Slade Prize for which the subject was *Pastoral Scene with Figures*. Through Jim Ede, who was both a good friend and patron of the young Monnington, it was later acquired by the Contemporary Art Society, who in 1944 presented it to Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museum. The figure holding a scythe is a self-portrait (see cat.no.171); the woman kneeling is Monnington's Mother, Elizabeth (see cat.no.78). The landscape in the background depicts the Cuckmere Valley on the South Coast, an area that Monnington felt a deep attachment to throughout his life.
Lent by Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museum



3* **Winter, 1921–22**

Oil on canvas, 122 × 216cm / 48 × 85in
PROVENANCE: The British School at Rome, Lowther Gardens, London; Sotheby's, London 14th October 1987, lot 118, purchased by Abbot and Holder; Alan and Susanna Powers
EXHIBITED: Exhibition of works submitted in the final competitions for the Rome Scholarship of 1922, Royal Academy, February 1923; International Exhibition of Modern and Decorative Industrial Art, Paris, April–October 1925, British Section, Grand Palais (309)
LITERATURE: Illustrated London News, 10th March 1923, vol. 162, p. 366. [Reproduced]

Winter was Monnington's winning submission for the 1922 British School at Rome Scholarship in Decorative Painting. The landscape is based on studies looking towards Clerebury Rings near Salisbury, undertaken during visits in 1921 to the artist's cousin Dr. R. C. Monnington. In a review in the Observer, (22 February 1923), P. C. Konody praised Monnington's painting for being steeped in the best traditions of the Italian Renaissance. His colour is dull, but there is a marked sense of style in his design.

A link with the Italian Renaissance can be demonstrated more specifically in relation to the work of Piero della Francesca: the young peasant leaning with both hands on a spade is a possible echo from the *Discovery and Proving of the True Cross* (San Francesco, Arezzo). The man sitting on a rock in the middle of the composition appears to be based on the figure of St. Joseph (in reverse) in Piero della Francesca's *Adoration*. I am grateful to Professor Luciano Chelles for these observations.

Lent by Sacha Llewellyn and Paul Liss

4 **Pastoral Scene – Design for a Decoration, circa, 1921**

Tempera on paper, Lunette 27 × 76.5cm / 10½ × 30in
 It is tempting to associate this lunette with Charles Sim's proposal that students from the four chief London painting schools produce lunettes for the decoration of County Hall. The prescribed subject – public parks and gardens under the jurisdiction of the London County Council – however seems to preclude any direct connection. The painting is clearly closely related to *Winter* in its subject matter, colour and composition.

5 **Study of a child, 1922**

Sanguine and black chalk, 36.3 × 26.9cm / 14¼ × 10¾in
EXHIBITED: The Slade, 1871–1971, Royal Academy, 1971 (128); Monnington, 1977 (3)
LITERATURE: The University, no. 1, Easter 1924, Supplement, *The Work of the Slade School*, p. iv; Andrew Forge, *The Slade*, 3, in *Motif*, 6, Spring 1961, p. 44, fig. 4
 The Slade awarded Monnington First Prize for Head Drawing, for this work in 1922. The subject is Dorethea, younger daughter of the artist's first cousin, Dr. R. C. Monnington.

Lent by the College Art Collections, University College, London



5

THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME

6* **The Wine Press, circa 1923**

Egg tempera on canvas, 101.6 × 150.2cm / 40 × 59½in
The Wine Press was painted in Rome, circa 1923, for Lord Balmiel, later Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, (see cat. no. 170). Pencil drawing visible over the paint layers, for instance in the left-hand baby's legs, represent later adjustments to the composition that Monnington considered.

Luciano Chelles has pointed out that the shed on the left and the baby lying on the ground are both borrowed from Piero della Francesca's *Adoration of the Christ Child*, (National Gallery, London). *The Adoration* was a seminal work for Monnington – he attributed his decision to become an artist to the revelation of first seeing it in the National Gallery as a boy. The hill town – rendered in a typically Quattrocento manner – recalls the background buildings in the *Adoration*. The town is based loosely on Orvieto and the double arched construction to the left more specifically depicts the Porta Rocca which stands at the town's outer walls.

The man with crossed legs is a likely echo from Piero's *Death of Adam* (Arezzo). The figure pressing grapes derives from one of the archers of Pollaiuolo's *Saint Sebastian*, (National Gallery, London).

Private Collection

7 **Italian peasant woman: a study for The Wine Press, circa 1923**

Pen and sepia ink and wash, heightened with white, with some pencil corrections, 56 × 32.5 cm., 22 × 12¾in
EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (7)
 This study was purchased by Sir Joseph Duveen and presented by him to the British Museum in 1927.

Lent by the Trustees of the British Museum

8 **Italian peasant woman, head and shoulders: a study for The Wine Press, circa 1923**

Red chalk and pen and sepia ink over pencil, squared for transfer, 10 × 9.5cm / 3⅞ × 3⅞in

9 **Orvieto: two studies for The Wine Press, circa 1923**

Pencil on tracing paper, overall dimensions 31 × 23cm / 12⅞ × 9in

I love Orvieto and regard it as my home in Italy more than any other place, Monnington to his brother Meredith (23 August 1923).

10 **Baptism, circa 1923**

Pencil, pen and ink, 17.8 × 25.4cm / 7 × 10in
 The composition is indebted to Piero della Francesca's *Baptism*. The painting is close in spirit to Monnington's *Allegory* (see cat. no. 18) and is likely to have preceded it.

11 **Baptism, circa 1923**

Pen, ink and wash on tracing paper, 17.8 × 25.4cm / 7 × 10in

12 **Baptism, circa 1923**

Inscribed with colour notes, pencil and brown ink, 15.2 × 14cm / 6 × 5½in

13 **Baptism, circa 1923**

Pencil and brown ink, 15.2 × 14cm / 6 × 5½in

14 **Baptism, circa 1923**

Pencil and brown ink, 15.2 × 14cm / 6 × 5½in



7

15* *The Annunciation, circa 1924/5*

Oil on canvas, 99 x 145cm / 39 x 57in

PROVENANCE: the Rt. Hon. F. Leverton Harris

EXHIBITED: Exhibition of Works Submitted in the Preliminary Competitions for the Rome Scholarship of 1926, together with Some Examples of the Work of Rome Scholars, Royal Academy, March 1926; Inspired by Italy, Exeter Museum and Art Gallery, August – September 1996, (21)

Although the subject of this painting is unclear it is most likely to be the Annunciation exhibited at the Royal Academy in March 1926. A reference by Monnington in December 1924, of his intention to paint another smaller picture, some work for which I have already done, in addition to his Allegory, may relate to this painting. In another letter, from Jim Ede, the British School at Rome is informed that Mr. Leverton Harris – listed as the owner of the painting when exhibited at the Royal Academy – thought of going to see the picture but it seems that as yet it is hardly begun. (23 March 1925).

The painting appears to be set in the Borghese Gardens, the setting Knights used for her Marriage at Cana, (1923–26).

16 *The Annunciation, circa 1924*

Pencil, pen and ink, watercolour and body colour,
25.6 x 31.7cm / 10 x 12½in

Lent by Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

17 *Woman, standing: a study for The Annunciation, circa 1924*

Pencil, 34.3 x 17.8cm / 13½ x 7in

18 *Study for Allegory, circa 1924*

Oil on tracing paper, laid on board, squared for transfer,
31.7 x 57.2cm / 12½ x 22½in

EXHIBITED: Inspired by Italy, Exeter Museum and Art Gallery, August – September 1996, (21)

Monnington's Allegory (Tate Gallery) was the major work of his tenure as Rome Scholar in Decorative Painting. The cartoon and related studies, commenced in the Spring of 1924, occupied the larger part of his second year. He commenced the execution of the painting, which was to occupy his third and final year, in March 1925; it was purchased in Rome, by Jim Ede for the Contemporary Art Society before it was completed, and was presented to the Tate Gallery in 1939.

The exact meaning of the Allegory is unclear and Monnington himself remained elusive about it; invited by the Tate to explain it, he replied, The idea is a bit complex and was based on the story of the Garden of Eden, but rather a personal interpretation of it (letter of 17 May 1953). When pressed, a few years later to elaborate, he answered, I don't think this picture has anything to do with the Garden of Eden story, but I am no more able to explain its exact meaning now than I was at the time I painted it. The whole design certainly had a very particular meaning and purpose and was an attempt to express in pictorial form my attitude to life – almost my faith (2 April 1957). Having to be content with this, the Tate Gallery retitled the picture Allegory – Monnington having always referred to it simply by the title Decoration. Iconographically it contains elements of several myths but most obviously The Garden of Love: specific episodes within the painting are reminiscent of Adam and Eve, Apollo and Daphne, and The Fountain of Youth.

Luciano Chelies has pointed out that the composition is to some extent an adaptation of Piero della Francesca's Death of Adam (San Francesco, Arezzo) and reproduces specific elements such as the figure sitting on the ground and the placing of a large tree at the centre of the composition. Ricketts and Shammon, reporting to the Faculty of Painting of the British School on Monnington's progress with his Decoration, observed that he was keenly alive to the merit of the Masterpieces he had seen in Italy and alive to the technical practices of the Masters (12 January 1925).

Lent by Sacha Llewellyn and Paul Liss

19 *Study for Allegory, circa 1924*

Gouache on tracing paper, laid on board, squared for transfer,
36.9 x 61cm / 14½ x 24in

The man on a ladder in contemporary dress and the seated monks below are omitted from the final composition.

20 *Study for Allegory, central section, circa 1924*

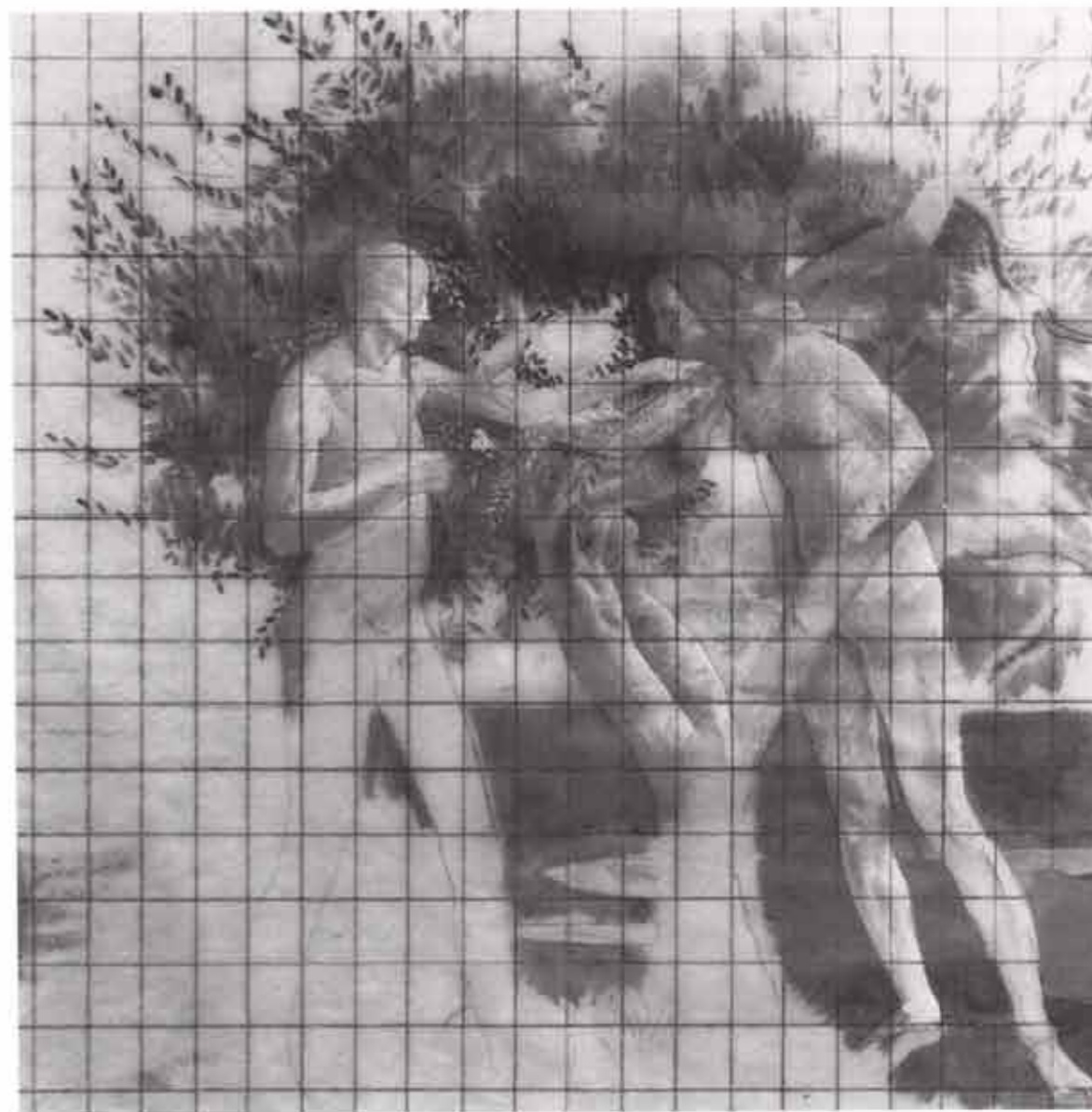
Oil on tracing paper, squared for transfer,
21 x 21cm / 8¼ x 8¼in

21 *Study for Allegory, left and central section, circa 1924*

Watercolour on tracing paper, 34.5 x 35cm / 13½ x 13½in

22 *Study for Allegory, left section, circa 1924*

Watercolour on tracing paper, 43.8 x 19cm / 17¼ x 7½in



- 23* *Study for Allegory: head of woman to right, circa 1925*
Illustrated on front cover; oil, 28 x 48.2cm / 11 x 19in
EXHIBITED: Inspired by Italy, Exeter Museum and Art Gallery, August - September 1996, (19)

The woman running to the right essentially reproduces (in reverse) the figure of Flora in Botticelli's *Primavera*. The presentation is also reminiscent of the fleeing figure in Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles*. Monnington would have seen both paintings in the Uffizi during the month long study trip to Florence (February/March 1924) undertaken immediately prior to starting his *Allegory*.

Lent by Sacha Lewellyn and Paul Lis



27

- 24 *Cartoon for Allegory: head of woman to right, circa 1925*

Pencil and brown ink on tracing paper,
40.6 x 48.2cm / 16 x 19in

Lent by Alan and Susanna Powers

- 25 *Study for Allegory: head of woman to right, circa 1925*

Pen and ink and tempera on canvas,
14 x 8.6cm / 5½ x 3½in

The medium of *Allegory* was pure egg tempera - Monnington ground the pigments and mixed them himself.

Lent by Alan and Susanna Powers



28

- 26 *Study for Allegory: head of woman to right, circa 1925*
Pen and ink and tempera on canvas,
11.5 x 7cm / 4½ x 2½in

- 27* *Study for Allegory: head of woman to right, circa 1925*
Inscribed in the artist's hand, on a label (verso), *Head of Girl*, (Not For Sale)

Pen and white chalk over pencil,
sight size 21.5 x 16cm / 8½ x 6¼in

EXHIBITED: Daily Express Young Artists Exhibition (circa 1926)

Lent by John Monnington

- 28 *Study for Allegory: head of woman to centre, with flower, circa 1925*

Tempera on canvas, 23.5 x 18.5cm / 9½ x 7½in

- 29 *Study for Allegory: head of woman to centre, circa 1925*
Red chalk; pencil, two sheets,
each 23.5 x 21cm / 9¼ x 8¼in

- 30 *Cartoon for Allegory, arms and Narcissi, circa 1925*

Pencil with sanguine to reverse on tracing paper,
43.2 x 30cm / 17 x 11 13/16in

The cartoons and studies Monnington has made ... are characterised by the utmost thoroughness and care; and some of his pencil drawings of hands, feet, plant forms etc. being quite notable in their sense of finish and beauty (Charles Ricketts, letter to Evelyn Shaw, 12 January 1925).

Lent by Alan and Susanna Powers

- 31 *Cartoon for Allegory, White Campion, circa 1925*

Pen and ink over pencil, 16.5 x 9.5cm, 6½ x 3¾in

- 32 *Study for Allegory, olive branch (recto); study of heads (verso), circa 1925*

Pencil and watercolour on buff paper, 16¾ x 12¼in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (10)

Lent by Lady Monnington

- 33 *Cartoon for Allegory, branch of olive tree, circa 1925*

Pencil with traces of sanguine, 38.7 x 53cm; 15¼ x 20¾in

- 34 *Cartoon for olive branch, circa 1925*

Pencil with traces of sanguine, inscribed in red with colour notes, 38.7 x 53cm; 15¼ x 20¾in

- 35 *Study for Allegory, olive tree, circa 1925*
Pen and ink on tracing paper, 28 x 31.5cm / 11 x 12½in

- 36 *Study for Allegory, olive tree, circa 1925*
Pen and ink, over pencil, squared for transfer with cotton,
28 x 31.5cm / 11 x 12½in

Lent by Lady Monnington

- 37 *Study of Phlox*

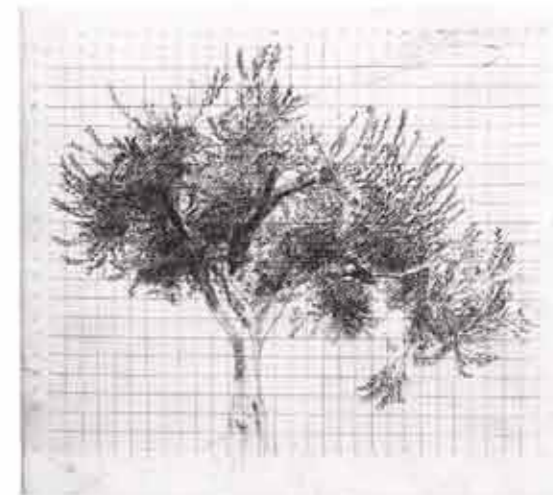
Pen and brown ink over pencil, 34 x 26cm / 13½ x 10¼in

- 38 *Study of Narcissi*

Pencil and chalk, 24 x 35.6cm / 14 x 9½in

- 39 *Study of Narcissus*

Pen and ink over pencil, 10.2 x 20.4cm / 4 x 8½in



36



40

ITALIAN LANDSCAPES

40 Umbrian Landscape, circa 1923

Oil on board, 23.5 x 33cm / 9¼ x 13in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (6)

In August 1923 Monnington reported to his Faculty that, owing to heat I found that I was unable to get on with my work in Rome ... and consequently ... I am doing some landscape studies which will I hope come in useful for future pictures. These were undertaken around Nocera Umbra, Umbria. This work is closely related to the landscape in *The Wine Press* (cat. no. 6).

Lent by James and Mary Monnington

41 Cartoon for Umbrian Landscape, circa 1923

Pencil on tracing paper, squared for transfer,

14 x 28.5cm / 5½ x 11¼in

42* Piediluco, circa 1925

Oil on panel, 43.2 x 61cm / 17 x 24in

EXHIBITED: RA 1939 (57); Lyons Salon 1955; Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, 1965 (46); Bicentenary Exhibition, 1768–1968, RA, December 1968–March 1969 (D.62); Nottingham University Art Gallery, 1973 (41); Monnington, 1977, (11); Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery, 1982 (64); Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums, 1985 (13); *The Edwardians and After*, Royal Academy, 1988, (41); *Inspired by Italy*, Exeter Museum and Art Gallery, August–September 1996, (18).

LITERATURE: *The Edwardians and After*, The Royal Academy of Arts, 1988 p. 124; Bicentenary Exhibition, 1768–1968, RA, December 1968–March 1969 (D.62)

Piediluco (literally foot of a sacred grove) is a small Umbrian town between Terni and Rieti. The Lake of Piediluco, seventeen kilometres in circumference, is surrounded by wooded hills, tall birches and firs, with occasional vineyards. From July to September, 1924, Monnington and Knights rented the top floor of a villa overlooking the lake; the landscape around Piediluco provided the background for *Allegory*.

Tom is out all day because he is doing backgrounds for his big picture, Knights reported to her Aunt shortly after arriving at Piediluco (28 July 1924). 'We do nothing but work, all day and everyday. Tom goes out with the boat all morning and again at 4 till 8.' (11 August 1924)

The panel was presented by Monnington as his Diploma Work on his election to the Royal Academy. In a letter to his student Hermione Hammond, dated 6 April 1939, Monnington commented that he was somewhat ashamed of the painting, describing it as, an insignificant landscape I did many years ago at Piediluco.

Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

43 Study for Piediluco, circa 1924

Watercolour and pen and ink on tracing paper,

28 x 48.9cm / 11 x 9½in

44 Lake Piediluco, circa 1924

Pen and ink and watercolour over pencil,

32.4 x 49.2cm / 12¼ x 19½in

45 Lake Piediluco, looking towards the hill top village of Labro, circa 1924

Pen and ink and watercolour over pencil,

32.4 x 49.2cm / 12¼ x 19½in

Writing from Piediluco Knights described Labro as overlooking one end of the lake – one of the most romantic mediaeval towns in Italy (16 September 1924)

46 Study looking across the lake to the village of Piediluco, circa 1924

Pencil, chalk, pen and ink, 34.2 x 62.8cm / 13½ x 24½in

47 Lake Piediluco, looking towards the hill top village of Labro, circa 1924

Pen and ink and watercolour over pencil,

32.4 x 49.2cm / 12¼ x 19½in

48 Lake Piediluco, circa 1924

Pen, ink and wash, 21.1 x 31.1cm / 9½ x 12¼in

49 Landscape with figures

Oil on canvas laid on board, 25 x 21cm / 9¾ x 8¼in

50 Landscape

Oil on canvas laid on board, 25.4 x 22.9cm / 10 x 9in

ST. STEPHEN'S HALL,
WESTMINSTER

51* *The English and Scottish Commissioners ...*

Full size cartoon, on two sheets, for *The English and Scottish Commissioners' present to Queen Anne at St. James's Palace the Articles of Agreement for the Parliamentary Union of the two countries, 1707*. Decoration for St. Stephen's Hall, Palace of Westminster, 1927

Signed in ink, lower left, and lower right, inscribed in the margin with names identifying the figures, and other notes, black chalk and wash, squared with pencil and red chalk, 325.1 x 348cm / 128 x 137in

LITERATURE: *Apollo* 6:113, September 1927, 113-119, reproduced 118

This was one of eight subjects set by Sir Henry Newbolt for the decorative scheme of history paintings in St. Stephen's Hall in the Palace of Westminster. The paintings, by eight artists working as a team under a Master Painter, Sir David

Young Cameron, were executed in matt oil colours in marble medium. Orpen was originally scheduled to paint this subject but dropped out. Cameron invited Monnington, then aged 23, to tackle it instead. Monnington was the youngest of the team by ten years and his inclusion – despite grumblings from Rothenstein about giving important wall space to untried youngsters, (William Rothenstein, *Since Fifty*, 1939, p.25), is evidence of his prodigious early reputation.

The finished work is 9 x 15 ft. Monnington clearly based his composition on Peter Angelis's *Queen Anne and the Knights of the Garter*, painted in 1713, (National Portrait Gallery). A small-scale preliminary oil sketch (31 x 44½) was given by Monnington to Cameron, who bequeathed it to the National Gallery of Scotland. A sanguine study for the head of a nobleman was purchased by the Contemporary Art Society and presented to the British Museum in 1927.

Monnington was working on the Cartoon when visited by Tonks in February 1927. Tonks, Monnington reported to his brother, *seemed to like the work very well ... Whatever else he may be, Monnington added, 'Tanks is a very great critic.*



Decoration for St. Stephen's Hall, Palace of Westminster, 1927
The English and Scottish Commissioners' present to Queen Anne at St. James's Palace the Articles of Agreement for the Parliamentary Union of the two countries, 1707. Oil on canvas over panel, 9 x 15ft

52 *Compositional Study, circa 1926*

Wash and pencil on tracing paper, 35.5 x 53.5 cm; 14 x 21in
Private collection

53 *Compositional Study, circa 1926*

Pen and ink, extensively inscribed with notes, 25.4 x 20.3 cm / 10 x 8in

This sheet represents Monnington's early ideas for the composition. A quantity of similar sheets demonstrate the extensive historic research that Monnington undertook for the composition.

54 *Compositional Study, circa 1926*

Pen and ink on tracing paper, 19 x 27cm / 7½ x 10¾
PROVENANCE: Randolph Schwabe

55 *Compositional Study, circa 1926*

Pen and ink and wash, with white highlights, squared in pencil, on tracing paper, 16 x 23.5cm / 6¼ x 9¼in
PROVENANCE: Randolph Schwabe

56 *Study for Queen Anne being presented with the Articles of Agreement, circa 1926*

Pen and ink over pencil with traces of red chalk on tracing paper, 36.8 x 27.3cm / 14½ x 10¾in

57 *Portrait study for the figure of Queen Anne, circa 1926*

Red chalk, 43.5 x 35.6cm / 17½ x 14in
Winifred Knights served as the model for this study.



58 *Drapery study for the figure of Queen Anne, circa 1926*

Red chalk, squared in pencil, 36 x 28cm / 14½ x 11in

59 *Study for the head of a nobleman, circa 1926*

Pencil, pencil, 33 x 24cm / 13 x 9½in
PROVENANCE: Lady Allen of Hurtwood

60 *Full length study for nobleman, ¾ rear view, circa 1926*

Signed, brown and white chalk over pencil, 55.9 x 31.7cm / 22 x 12½in

61 *Study for trees, St. James's Park, circa 1926*

Pencil, inscribed with colour note, 29.2 x 22.9cm / 11½ x 9in

These appear on the right hand side of the composition, viewed through the window overlooking St. James's Park.

62 *Study for trees, St. James's Park, circa 1926*

Pencil, with traces of red chalk, 29.2 x 22.9cm / 11½ x 9in
These appear on the left hand side of the composition.

63 *Study for the right hand curtains, St. James's Palace, circa 1926*

Pencil and red chalk, 55.9 x 36.8cm / 22 x 14½in
EXHIBITED: Monnington, Royal Academy, 1977 (15)

64 *Study for the central curtains, St. James's Palace, circa 1926*

Pencil, 35.5 x 28cm / 14 x 11in



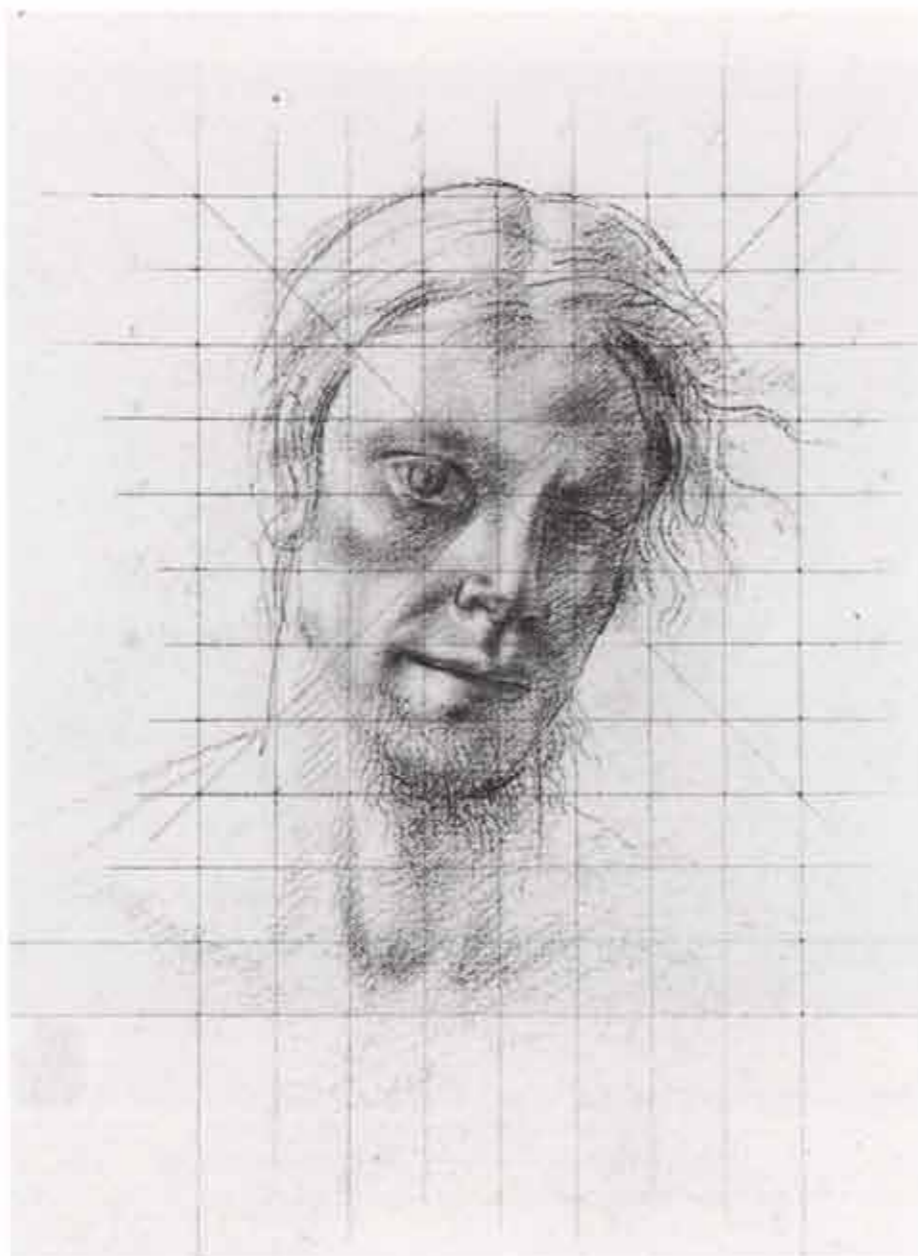
THE BANK OF ENGLAND MURALS

- 65 Portrait study for *The Doorkeeper receiving a Message in the Entrance to the Parlours (The Strong Group)*, circa 1932.
Chalk, squared for transfer, inscribed with notes, 30.5 x 25.4cm / 12 x 10in.
The St. Stephen's murals inspired the Directors of the Bank of England to commission a decorative scheme to celebrate the Bank's rebuilding by Sir Herbert Baker. Cameron again co-ordinated the work of a team of artists, five of whom – Clausen, Gill, Lawrence, Rothenstein and Monnington – had worked under him at Westminster. *The Doorkeeper receiving a Message in the Entrance to the Parlours*, was the second of Monnington's three murals. The scheme, which was widely criticised, was a disappointment to Monnington: *they certainly look shocking and I forgive any criticism, he confided to his brother (6 May 1932). The Times surmised that the problem was to combine a document with a decoration (30 April 1932).*
The final painting which measured 97 x 52 inches was completed in 1933. This study is of the central of the three figures, W. J. Strong, the doorkeeper.
- 66 Study for *The Doorkeeper Receiving a Message in the Entrance to the Parlours*, circa 1932
Black chalk, 32.5 x 24cm / 12 7/8 x 9 1/2in.
This and the following two drawings are studies for the Parlour Messenger, (H. Gardner), who appears on the left hand side of the mural.
- 67 Study for *The Doorkeeper Receiving a Message in the Entrance to the Parlours*, circa 1932
Pencil, 45 x 28cm / 17 3/4 x 11in.
- 68 Study for *The Doorkeeper Receiving a Message in the Entrance to the Parlours*, circa 1932
Pencil on tracing paper, squared, 50.6 x 37cm / 20 x 14 9/16in.

neral Works Manager and the
St. Luke Printing Works, circa 1934
d ink, 34 x 25cm / 13 3/8 x 9 7/16in
an studies for his third Bank of England
le completed the cartoon in 1936.
for St. Luke Printing Works,
paper, squared, 30.5 x 14.6cm / 12 x 5 3/4in
figure St. Luke Printing Works,
paper, squared, 22.9 x 25.4cm / 9 x 10in



A Director Announcing the Bank Rate to the Chief Official of the Bank of England ('No Change'), 1932
Oil on canvas, 96 x 112in, Bank of England, London
Reproduced courtesy of The Governor and Company of the Bank of England



75

SUPPER AT EMMAUS

72 *Supper at Emmaus, 1931*

Tempera on canvas, 53.3 x 190.5cm / 21 x 75in

The *Supper at Emmaus* was commissioned as a memorial to Nathan Barnes in the Otmrod Chapel of St. Peter's Parish Church, Bolton, Lancashire; it was completed in 1931. The subject is the revelation of Christ Resurrected to two of his disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24.13-26). Iconographically Monnington's interpretation of the story is a conventional one – on the left Christ appears to his disciples; in the centre the supper takes place; on the right the disciples depart to spread news of the miracle. Parallels can be drawn between the composition, execution and colour of Monnington's *Supper at Emmaus* and Knights' altarpiece for the Milner Memorial Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral, painted between 1928 and 1933. 'N' reviewing Monnington's work (in an unidentified newspaper cutting) commented: *Of modern English religious painters one can only think of one other – Stanley Spencer – who strikes the same note of sincerity; he praised the subtle swaying line linking the figures together, and particularly admired the deliciously painted and very English landscape background... done in the Perugino idiom, tranquil and tender in its detail.*

Lent by St. Peter's Parish Church, Bolton

73 *Supper at Emmaus: small scale version, circa 1931*

Chalk, crayon, watercolour, body colour and final touches of pencil, 4.5 x 16.2cm / 1 1/4 x 6 1/4in

PROVENANCE: Meredith Monnington

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (18)

Lent by James and Mary Monnington

74 *Supper at Emmaus: small scale version, circa 1931*

Chalk, over pencil and pen and ink on tracing paper, 4.5 x 16.2cm / 1 1/4 x 6 1/4in

PROVENANCE: Rodney Burn

75 *Study for the head of Christ, circa 1931*

Pencil, squared for transfer, 17.8 x 13.3cm / 7 x 5 1/4in

Although less apparent in the finished painting this study suggests that the head of Christ was based on a self portrait. The direct gaze, a feature retained in the finished painting where Christ looks directly out to the viewer, is unusual in depictions of this subject.

76 *Study for the head of Christ, circa 1931*

Pencil, squared for transfer, 30.2 x 23.5cm / 11 7/8 x 9 1/4in

Lent by James and Mary Monnington

77 *Landscape study for the right hand side of The Supper at Emmaus, circa 1931*

Pastel over pencil, 31.8 x 43.8cm / 12 1/2 x 17 1/4in

Monnington painted the background from studies made near his mother's house in Sussex, where he and Knights had a cottage and a barn, seen here, which served as a studio. Private collection

78 *St. Anne, circa 1930*

Oil on canvas, laid on board, 20cm / 7 7/8in diameter.

St. Anne traditionally wears a green cloak over a red robe. The model depicted is Elizabeth Monnington, the artist's mother. Although not related to the *Supper at Emmaus* stylistically the painting dates to the same period.



72

BRITISH LANDSCAPES

- 79 *Garden with two figures, early 1930's*
Watercolour, pencil and gouache, 29.2 x 33cm / 11½ x 13in
This study is possibly set in the garden of Tonks' house, 1 The Vale, Chelsea. Monnington and Knights occupied the ground floor from 1930–37. The composition is strongly reminiscent of the *Annunciation* (cat. no. 15).
- 80 *Mother and child, circa 1934*
Brown ink and wash, 24 x 31.8cm / 9½ x 12½in
Set within the same garden as the previous work, this possibly depicts Knights with their son John (born 1934).
- 81 *St. Mawes, Cornwall, 1934*
Signed with initials and dated
Oil on panel, 26.7 x 35.5cm / 10½ x 14in
PROVENANCE: Meredith Monnington
EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (26); *Landscape in Britain, 1850–1950*, Arts Council 1983 (202)
This is a view of the harbour at St. Mawes with Pendennis Castle (left) and the tall circular central fort of Henry VIII's Castle in the distance. The view is one of a series paintings that resulted from a sailing holiday with Monnington's cousin Eric Wardrup. A pen and ink drawing of the landscape behind St. Mawes was exhibited at the RA in 1934 (1204).
Lent by Mr and Mrs Christopher Monnington



79

- 82 *Porth Navas, Cornwall, 1933*
Signed with initials and dated
Oil on board, 26.7 x 35.5cm / 10½ x 14in
- 83* *Helford looking towards Porth Navas, Cornwall, circa 1933*
Oil on canvas, 51 x 61cm / 20½ x 24in
PROVENANCE: Meredith Monnington
Helford, where Monnington executed a number of works, was home to his Aunt Agnes. This painting was a wedding present for Meredith Monnington's first wife, Ann.
Lent by Mr and Mrs Christopher Monnington
- 84 *Helford River, Cornwall, circa 1933*
Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 55.9cm / 18 x 22in
- 85 *West Somerton, Norfolk, 1934*
Tempera on panel, 24.1 x 35cm / 9½ x 13½in
EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (31)
This was painted while Monnington and Knights were staying with Evelyn Shaw (see cat. no. 171) at West Somerton on the Norfolk Broads, after the birth of their son John in the summer of 1934. The view is of the Dyke and Somerton West Marsh Mill, from Staithes, where Shaw moored his sailing-boats. Monnington gave the painting to his sister-in-law, Eileen Knights, on her marriage to Harold Palmer, 1934. He exhibited a pen and wash drawing of Somerton at the Royal Academy 1935 (1204).
Lent by Martin Palmer



81

- 86 *Mr. Thane's House, West Somerton, Norfolk, 1934*
Pencil, 38.7 x 56.3cm / 15¼ x 22¼in
The christening of the artists' son, John, took place at the house of Mr Thane, a local worthy owner.
- 87 *Sussex Landscape, 1930*
Signed and dated in red, oil on canvas laid on panel, 15.2 x 21.5cm / 6 x 8½in
PROVENANCE: Rodney Burn
Probably executed near to his mother's family home, Mount Pleasant, Crawley Down (see cat. no. 77).
- 88 *Glen Etive, Argyll, circa 1946*
Oil on board, 26.7 x 35.5cm / 10½ x 14in
The view is from the garden of Stephen and Ginny Courtauld looking towards Ardehatten Priory.
- 89 *Glen Etive, Argyll, circa 1946*
Oil on board, 26.7 x 35.5cm / 10½ x 14in
The view is of Red Donald's House, at the mouth of the River Awe.
- 90 *Cladnaghara, circa 1969*
Pencil over pen and ink, 29.5 x 43.5cm / 11¾ x 17¼in
From the mid-1960s Monnington spent many holidays at Cladnaghara, County Donegal.



94

WORLD WAR TWO

- 91 *Study for Battle Area, 15,000 feet, 1943*
Watercolour over pencil, 24.1 x 30.8cm / 9½ x 12¼in
Monnington began World War II in the design team of the Directorate of Camouflage. By August 1943, when he applied to become an official war artist, he had completed over 600 hours of flying time. He spoke of being so engrossed with aerial observation that up to this point all thought of painting had been put out of my head. His application, however, showed a keenness to re-engage with painting: From the limited amount of war painting which I have seen it does not appear to me that the war in the air, as seen from the air, has been recorded in a way comparable with the significance which this aspect of the war deserves. The first major product of Monnington's appointment as Official War Artist, (November 1943) was *Battle Area, 15,000 feet, 1943* (Manchester City Art Gallery). Monnington later expressed disappointment with his aerial studies: With the possible exception of the skyscape without any aircraft (*Battle Area, 15,000 feet*) I have got little of what I wanted of the feeling of being in the air.
- 92* *Tempests Attacking Flying Bombs 1944*
Oil on canvas, 90.1 x 120.8cm / 35½ x 47½in
Commissioned in 1944, along with *Southern England*, *Tempests* was one of Monnington's major works as a war artist. The painting records the Battle of Britain which Monnington witnessed from Leyswood, looking across to Bullfinches Farm (see cat. no. 121).
Lent by The Imperial War Museum, London
- 93 *Compositional studies for Tempests Attacking Flying Bombs 1944*
Blue ink over black chalk, 13.3 x 16.5cm / 5¼ x 6½in
- 94 *Study for Southern England, circa 1944*
Blue ink and wash over pencil, 16.5 x 20.3cm / 6½ x 8in
Commissioned in the same year as *Tempests Attacking Flying Bombs*, *Southern England* also records the Battle of Britain over Leyswood. The finished painting is in the Collection of Imperial War Museum.
- 95 *Flying Fortresses over Europe, 1943*
Watercolour over pencil, 16.5 x 20.3cm / 6½ x 8in

- 96 *Flying Fortresses over Europe, 1943*
Watercolour over pencil on tracing paper,
25 x 18cm / 9⁷/₈ x 7¹/₂in.
- 97 *Study of Focke Wulfe wing, circa 1944*
Pencil and pen and ink, 22 x 21cm / 8⁵/₈ x 8¹/₂in
This and the following study are related to Monnington's
Burnt-out Focke Wulfe and Typhoons at Antwerp, 1944 (Imperial
War Museum).
- 98 *Study of Focke Wulfe wing, circa 1944*
Pencil, 17 x 21cm / 6⁵/₁₆ x 8¹/₂in
- 99 *Study of an army camp, circa 1944*
Wash over pencil, 25.5 x 35.5cm / 10 x 14in
This study is related to Monnington's *Homer on Launching
Aufield, 1944* (Imperial War Museum).
- 100 *Study of a mobile radar unit, 1944*
Pen and ink, 17.2 x 19.5cm / 6³/₄ x 7⁵/₁₆in
Drawn while Monnington was at Luneberg Heath,
attached to No.83 Group of the 2nd Tactical Air Force in
Europe, this sketch relates to a painting entitled *Radar
Aerials and Type 70, 1944* (Imperial War Museum).
- 101 *Rear view of an army lorry carrying refugees, 1943*
Pen and ink, 17.2 x 19.5cm / 6³/₄ x 7⁵/₁₆in
In 1943 Antwerp was consistently and heavily bombed –
this study relates to the evacuation of Antwerp in which
Monnington was caught up.
- 102 *Plane Design for Barnes Wallis, circa 1945*
Gouache and pencil on tracing paper,
21 x 36.8cm / 8¹/₄ x 14¹/₂in
Monnington met Barnes Wallis at the Vickers Aeroplane
works when both were working at the Brooklands race
track. Wallis – inventor of the Wellington Bomber and the
bouncing bomb – asked Monnington to apply his talent
to improving the appearance of a heavy bomber which
was being developed at the time.
- 103 *Plane Design for Barnes Wallis, circa 1945*
Pencil on tracing paper, 30.5 x 15.2cm / 12 x 6in

- 104 *Blitz scene; Firefighters*
Watercolour, squared in pencil, 41.2 x 28cm / 16¹/₄ x 11in
- 105 *Blitz scene; Firefighters*
Brown wash, 20.5 x 16.8cm / 8¹/₈ x 6⁵/₈in
- 106 *Blitz scene; Firefighters*
Pen and blue and brown ink and pencil,
19.5 x 17.2cm / 7⁵/₁₆ x 6⁷/₁₆in
- 107 *Camberwell, circa 1945*
Wash over pencil, 31.7 x 45cm / 12³/₂ x 17⁵/₈in
Monnington taught at the Camberwell School of Art from
1945–49. This watercolour is one of a number recording
bomb damage.
- 108 *Bomb damaged house, Camberwell, circa 1945*
Watercolour over pencil, 28 x 38.1cm / 11 x 15in
- 109 *Camberwell, circa 1945*
Wash over pencil, 25.4 x 35.3cm / 10 x 14in



107

LEYSWOOD, GROOMBRIDGE

- 110 *The Artist's Home at Groombridge, circa 1950*
Oil on canvas, 102 x 76.5cm / 40 x 30¹/₂in
Leyswood, in Kent, was Monnington's home from 1937
until his death. The view here is from the artist's cottage,
looking over the garden towards the studio of Kathleen
Leigh-Pemberton (left) and the Bothy (right). This mono-
chromatic study relates to a painting of the same scene
which appeared at Sotheby's on 24 March 1994, lot 89.
- 111 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Watercolour over pencil, with white highlights, marked
with intersecting diagonals, 26.7 x 36.8cm / 10⁵/₂ x 14¹/₂in
Although never worked into a major painting numerous
studies exist for *The Postman*. In these the basic composition
remains the same: postman Setford enters from the right;
the artist, his wife Evelyn, and son John (leaning on a gun)
stand centre left, by a large cherry tree (cat.no.120).
Emerging from the left are Monnington's neighbours, the
sculptor A. H. Gerrard and his wife, the painter, Kathleen
Leigh-Pemberton, (whose studio is seen behind). The other,
distant figures, are Mr and Mrs Young, emerging from their
home in the Bothy, (see cat.no.110).



112

- 112 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Wash and pencil, marked with intersecting diagonals,
24 x 38.8cm / 9⁵/₁₆ x 15¹/₂in
- 113 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Pencil and wash, marked with intersecting diagonals and
inscribed with mathematical notations relating to square
roots and the golden section, 28 x 39cm / 11 x 15³/₈in
- 114 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Pen and ink over pencil and wash, marked with intersecting
diagonals, 28 x 39cm / 11 x 15³/₈in
- 115 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Pen and ink on tracing paper, 10.2 x 16.5cm / 4 x 6¹/₂ in
- 116 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Pen and ink on tracing paper, 10.2 x 16.5cm / 4 x 6¹/₂ in
- 117 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Pen and ink on tracing paper, 10.2 x 16.5cm / 4 x 6¹/₂ in
- 118 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Wash over pencil on tracing paper, 10.2 x 16.5cm / 4 x 6¹/₂ in
- 119 *Study for The Postman, circa 1948*
Wash over pencil on tracing paper, 10.2 x 16.5cm / 4 x 6¹/₂ in



113

120 Study of Prunus Tree, circa 1945

Pencil, inscribed with colour notes,
39.4 x 43.8cm / 15½ x 17¼in

This is probably a study for the drawing *Cherry Tree*, in wash and white, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1945 (1004). The same tree, which stood in the drive at Leyswood, features prominently in the studies for *The Postman*.

121 Bullfinches Farm, 1948

Oil on canvas

EXHIBITED: Royal Academy, 1948 (340)

Bullfinches Farm, across the fields from Leyswood Cottage, was the setting for *Tempests Attacking Flying Bombs* and the subject of numerous drawings and studies.

Lent by Lady Monnington.

122 Landscape study for Bullfinches Farm, circa 1948

Black ink and wash, marked with intersecting diagonals, on tracing paper, 28.5 x 31.7cm / 11¼ x 12½in

Monnington was fascinated with the Golden Mean – a mathematically determined concept of perfect proportion established through intersecting diagonals (based on square roots). The underlying structure of these intersecting diagonals becomes increasingly apparent in Monnington's work from this point on.



120

123 Bullfinches Farm, circa 1948

Pen and ink, 16.8 x 20cm / 6¾ x 7¾in

124 Leyswood Cottage and Apple Trees, circa 1952

Oil on canvas, 28 x 30 ins.

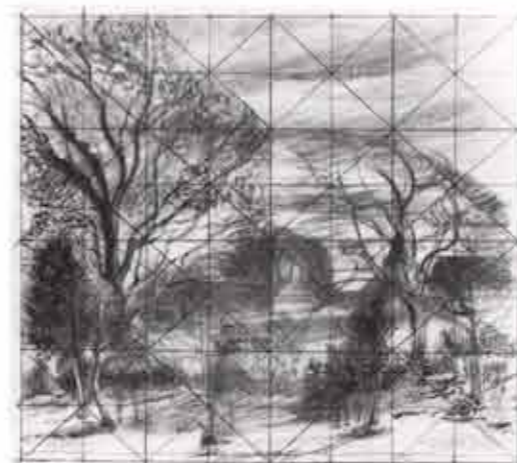
EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (40)

Monnington's admiration for Cézanne is evident. This painting was given to Mrs Meredith Monnington as a wedding present in 1952.

Lent by Christopher Monnington



126



122

125 Study for Leyswood Cottage and Apple Trees, circa 1952

Black chalk, 30 x 43.5cm / 11¼ x 17¼in

Monnington typically produced studies in series; like Cézanne he felt that he could learn through continually returning to the same subject.

126 The Orchard, Leyswood, circa 1952

Pencil, 43.1 x 36.8cm / 17 x 14½in

A painting of this subject was exhibited at the Royal Academy 1954 (82).

127 Study of Trees, circa 1955

Watercolour over pencil, 30 x 43.5cm / 11¼ x 17¼in

The trees in the sand pit behind Leyswood were the subject of a series of studies in the mid-1950s.

128 View from Leyswood across the Valley of the river Rother, towards Eridge

Pen and ink over pencil, on tracing paper,

22.3 x 35cm / 8¾ x 13¾in

POST WAR CEILINGS AND MURALS

129 Design for the Conference Hall ceiling, Council House, Bristol, circa 1953

Inscribed on the reverse, working study

Tempera over pencil on a gesso ground,

76.3 x 193.1cm / 30 x 76in

EXHIBITED: Royal Academy, 1956 (1174)

The new Bristol Council House was designed by Vincent Harris BA in the late 1940s. Monnington was commissioned to paint the Conference Hall ceiling by the Edwin Austin Abbey Trust for Mural Painting in Great Britain.

In addition to the link with Piero della Francesca noted by Judy Egerton, it is tempting to cite the paintings of the Italian futurist Balla as a source of inspiration for Monnington. The contemporary sculptures of Monnington's neighbour, Professor A. H. Gerrard, should also be noted in this context.

130 Design for Bristol, circa 1953

Tempera over pencil on a gesso ground,

76.3 x 193.1cm / 30 x 76in

131 Design for Bristol, circa 1953

Pencil and chalk on tracing paper, 61 x 33cm / 24 x 13in

132 Design for Bristol, circa 1953

Pencil and chalk on tracing paper, 61 x 33cm / 24 x 13in

133 Design for Bristol, for the corner square symbolising Electronics, circa 1953

Brown crayon on paper, overlaid with chalk and green

crayon on tracing paper, 36 x 39cm / 14½ x 15½in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (45)

John Monnington recalls that his father always admired the taut curves and economic cross-bracing of radio masts and electricity pylons. A photograph taken looking upwards inside the Crystal Palace television mast (reproduced on the cover of *Radio Times*) captured his imagination and inspired this design.

134* *Design for the ceiling of the Mary Harris Memorial Chapel of Holy Trinity, University of Exeter, 1956*

Oil on board, 43.7 x 122cm / 17¼ x 48in

The chapel was designed by Vincent Harris RA (architect of the Bristol Council House) in memory of his mother. He commissioned Monnington to paint the 12 x 28ft ceiling in 1956. Monnington completed his designs during 1956 and his assistants Scott Medd and W. B. (Peter) Lowe took 11 months to execute it. Lowe recalls: 'Tom maintained that it was difficult to draw angels in the twentieth century, and was comforted by the enduring qualities of geometry and light. The design, based on simple geometry, was visualised as overlapping webs of transparent light extending into and partly veiling the mysteries of space'.

135 *Design for Exeter, 1956*

Oil on board, 43.7 x 122cm / 17¼ x 48in

Essentially the same design this work experiments with a colour range not used in the final execution.

136 *Design for Exeter, 1956*

Pencil and chalk on tracing paper, 21 x 75cm / 8¼ x 29½in

Thirty of Monnington's designs for the Exeter and Bristol ceilings were purchased after his death by the National Art-Collections Fund and presented to the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Academy, the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (see NACF 73rd Annual Report, 1976, no. 2603). All the designs are on tracing paper.

137 *Design for the University of London Students' Union Mural, circa 1964*

Gouache over pencil, 33 x 51cm / 13 x 20½in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (54)

In 1964 The Edwin Austin Abbey Trust for Mural Painting in Great Britain commissioned two further works from Monnington, for the University of London Students' Union. The first of the two designs was executed in situ, in polyvinyl acetate on a panel 8 x 20 ft.; Monnington followed the design and colouring of this study in the final mural. The resultant geometric abstract is very different from the rather florid *Scholar Gypsy* painted by Gilbert Spencer RA in 1957, also under the terms of the Abbey Trust, on the floor below.

138 *Design for Students' Union, circa 1964*

Gouache over pencil, 36.8 x 53.5cm / 14½ x 21¼in

139 *Design for Students' Union, circa 1964*

Gouache over pencil, 36.8 x 53.5cm / 14½ x 21¼in

140 *Design for Students' Union, circa 1969*

Acrylic on board, 43.2 x 33cm / 17 x 13in

The second mural, measuring 9 x 6 ft., was painted in Monnington's studio in acrylic on linen. Not started until 1969 Monnington explained the delay in an interview for the *Sunday Express*: 'It has been a failing all my life that I take a long time to resolve a painting problem. I take a year to do one painting because I make innumerable studies preparing the way ... I am now preparing something for the summer exhibition - I expect that I will use that as a basis for the mural. The mural was completed and installed in the early 1970s but later removed from the Students' Union and is assumed to have been destroyed. The earlier mural has within the last three years suffered a similar fate. The Gilbert Spencer mural has fared only slightly better - it has remained in situ, but covered over.'

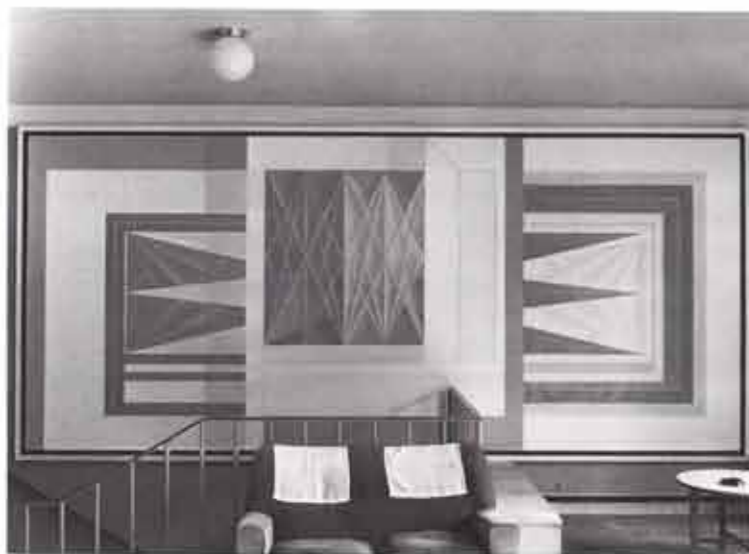
141 *Design for Students' Union, circa 1969*

Chalk on tracing paper, 25.3 x 20.3cm / 10 x 8in

142 *Design for the main staircase of The British Museum, 1966*

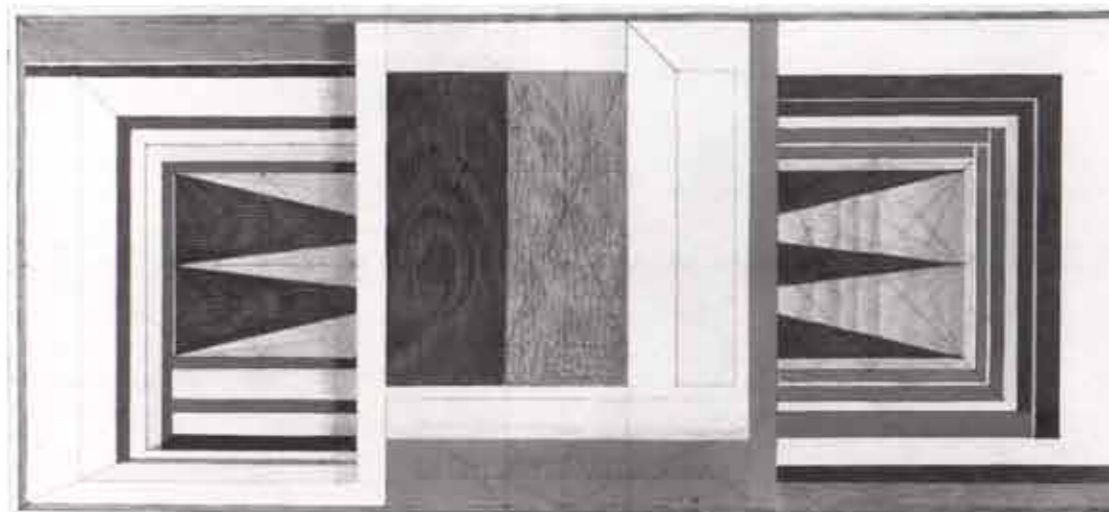
Pencil, wax crayon and watercolour on tracing paper, 50.5 x 38.5cm / 19¾ x 15¼in

Monnington was approached by his fellow trustees in 1966 to submit some design proposals for the redecoration of the main staircase. His proposal, which was not adopted, subdivided the wall surface into painted panels with two alternative decorative schemes: one using ornament related to the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities; the other a modern abstract design. It appears that the statue of Shakespeare by Roubillac, shown in outline, was one of the objects considered for display on the staircase.



Left Mural for the University of London Students' Union, 1964. Polyvinyl acetate on a panel 8 x 20 ft., destroyed circa 1995

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STATIONS OF THE CROSS, BREDE

143 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 61 x 50.8cm / 24 x 20in

Monnington began designs for fourteen stations of the Cross for St. George's Parish Church, Brede, Sussex, in 1959; he exhibited studies for *Jesus meets his mother* and *Jesus falls for the first time* at the Royal Academy that year. The works were commissioned by the Rector of Brede, Rev. Percy Hill, with the support of Bishop George Bell who enthusiastically endorsed the choice of Monnington: 'If you could get Monnington it would be wonderful. Monnington accepted the commission at a cost of £100 for each station. He expressed a preference to execute the works as frescoes, but since the surface of the ancient walls did not allow this, painted them instead in tempera on panels. The work took several years to complete, Monnington becoming deeply moved by the



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subject matter. The last four or five stations are markedly different in style from the earlier ones, as Monnington was increasingly drawn towards abstraction. Strong stylistic parallels can be made between Monnington's Stations and Paul Nash's Twelve woodcuts for Genesis published in 1924 (The Nonesuch Press).

144 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 32.2 x 25.3cm / 12⁷/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆in

145 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 32.2 x 25.3cm / 12⁷/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆in

146 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 32.2 x 25.3cm / 12⁷/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆in

147 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 32.2 x 25.3cm / 12⁷/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆in

148 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 32.2 x 25.3cm / 12⁷/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆in

149 Study for the Fifth Station, The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene, circa 1960

Charcoal over intersecting diagonals in red wax crayon, on tracing paper, 32.2 x 25.3cm / 12⁷/₁₆ x 9⁷/₁₆in

ABSTRACT PAINTINGS

150 Clematis, circa 1960

Acrylic on board, 130 x 92cm / 51¹/₁₆ x 36¹/₄in

This work was inspired by a Clematis Montana growing at Leyswood. My interest in abstract is in trying to do something more than imitate. Monnington explained in an interview for the Church Times, (30 December 1966). I think it is possible that, through a more abstract approach, one can get nearer to the underlying nature of reality. A still life entitled Clematis – exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1959 (34) – was possibly the point of departure for this more abstract interpretation. It is closely related to the ceiling of the Mary Harris Memorial Chapel in its colour and construction. Bristol and Exeter were undoubtedly instrumental in Monnington's pursuit of 'Geometric' paintings (a term he preferred to Abstracts). When the Tate purchased Monnington's Square Design (1967) he spoke of his abstract paintings as direct descendants from my ceiling painting in the Council House, Bristol, which was my first departure from purely representational painting. Since then I have been increasingly interested in the subdivisions of surface areas contained in equilateral rectangles (squares) and rectangles derived from square roots. These two-dimensional mathematical relationships suggest to me dimensions in depth, and provide a discipline which at the present time I find as necessary and interesting as that imposed previously in representational painting... You can cut out the blurb if you wish, but I was trying for my own edification to put into words what I think I have been trying to do in the last ten years (letter of 12 June 1968).

151 Study for Clematis, circa 1960

Pastel over pencil on tracing paper, 31.5 x 20cm / 12³/₈ x 7⁷/₈in

152 Abstract Design, 1960s

Pastel over pencil and red crayon, 24.1 x 18.4cm / 9¹/₂ x 7³/₄in

153 Abstract Design, 1960s

Pastel over pencil and red crayon, 24.1 x 18.4cm / 9¹/₂ x 7³/₄in

154 Abstract Design, 1960s

Pastel over pencil and red crayon, 24.1 x 18.4cm / 9¹/₂ x 7³/₄in

155 Abstract Design, 1960s

Pastel over pencil, 24.1 x 18.4cm / 9¹/₂ x 7³/₄in

156* Grey and White Abstract, circa 1969

Illustrated on back cover
Acrylic on panel, 99.6 x 85cm / 39¹/₄ x 33¹/₂in

157 Abstract Design, circa 1968

Chalk and pen and ink, inscribed with square roots, 14 x 25cm / 5¹/₂ x 9⁷/₈in

This is closely related to the Abstract Design on Roof Five exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1968 (421)

158 Abstract Design, circa 1969

Pastel over pencil on tracing paper, 37.5 x 25.3cm / 15 x 10in

This is closely related to the 1969 Design for the University of London Students' Union Mural.

159 Abstract Design, late 1960s

Pen and ink and pastel over pencil and red crayon, on tracing paper, 22 x 31.5cm / 8⁵/₈ x 12³/₅in

The cut-out shape at the bottom of this and the following design suggests that they may have been intended for a specific space.

160 Abstract Design, late 1960s

Pen and ink over pencil, on tracing paper, 22 x 31.5cm / 8⁵/₈ x 12³/₅in

161 Abstract Design, late 1960s

Pen and ink and pastel over pencil, on tracing paper, 38.1 x 22.2cm / 15 x 8³/₄in

162 Reciprocity, circa 1970

Tempera on board, 91.4 x 132cm / 36 x 52in

EXHIBITED: RA 1971 (77)

Previewing this work in a newspaper interview (Tate archive, source and date not given) Monnington referred to it as only his second picture in two years. This he explained was on account of being an extremely slow worker and painting in a rather old-fashioned mixture of eggs, oil and water, which was used by the early Italian painters. Asked what the finished painting would look like, Monnington replied, it will consist of a lot of squares. The link that Monnington clearly made with the early Italian painters, not only through the pursuit of perfect proportion but technique, demonstrates the underlying continuity in his work. There was no distinction in his mind between figurative and abstract art. Surely what matters is not whether a work is abstract or representative, but whether it has merit. If those who visit exhibitions would come without preconceptions, would apply to art the elementary standards they apply in other spheres, they might glimpse new horizons. They might ask themselves: is this work distinguished or is it commonplace? Fresh and original or uninspired, derivative and dull? Is it modest or pretentious? (Interview in the *Christian Science Monitor* 29 May 1967).

163 Study for Reciprocity, circa 1970

Chalk on tracing paper, 20.3 x 14cm / 8 x 5½in

PORTRAITS

164 Portrait of Winifred Knights, circa 1925

Tempera on canvas, 27 x 22cm / 10½ x 8¾in

This is one of many studies of Monnington's first wife, the artist Winifred Knights, known to her fellow-artists and friends as Jane. Born in London on 5th June 1899, she studied at the Slade School and in 1920 won the Scholarship in Decorative Painting offered by the British School at Rome, where Monnington, winning the same scholarship two years later, followed her. Her work, particularly the meticulous observation and fine searching line of her pencil studies, influenced Monnington in the 1920s. Knights is the principal figure in the several episodes of Monnington's *Allegory* and the execution and tempera medium of this painting suggests that it can be similarly dated (see especially cat no. 28). She married Monnington in Rome on 23 April 1924.

165 Eugenie Strong, 1926

Signed and inscribed Mrs. Eugenie Strong/done in Rome/ 1926

sanguine, sight size 36.8 x 25.4cm / 14½ x 10 ins.

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (9)

This portrait was drawn soon after the sitter's retirement as assistant director of the British School at Rome. Eugenie Strong (1860-1943), classical archaeologist, historian of Roman art and life fellow of Girton College, published her most important work *Roman Sculpture from Augustine to Constantine*, in 1907. In 1909 she was appointed assistant director of the British School at Rome; she retired in 1925, but continued to live in Rome, where her flat in the Via Balbo became an intellectual and social centre for scholars and students, until her death in 1943.

Lent by Balita Chesser

166 Sir Joseph John Thomson, 1932

Signed, chalk, 39.3 x 30.5cm / 15½ x 12in

EXHIBITED: Royal Academy 1933 (1192)

Monnington, 1977 (28)

Sir Joseph John Thomson, FRS, OM (1856-1940), won the Nobel Prize in 1906, was Cavendish professor of experimental physics 1894-1919 and President of the Royal Society 1915-20. Thomson's discovery of the electron as a constitu-

ent in the structure of matter provided the basis for modern atomic physics; his discovery that gases could be made conductors of electricity by passing waves and particles through them paved the way for radar (and this provides a link between this drawing and the subject of cat.no. 100). He became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1918.

This portrait of Thomson at the age of 76 was commissioned by Sir Henry Hake for the Contemporary Portraits Fund, and later presented to the National Portrait Gallery. It was drawn in the Master's Lodge at Trinity in August 1932. Thomson himself told Hake, all my family think it very good, but Monnington later recalled (letter to National Portrait Gallery, 27 July 1960) that the Master's wife burst into tears when she saw the drawing; it has always worried me to know why... He was a wonderful person to draw.

Thomson was also a wonderful conversationalist, who would talk with anyone about almost anything, and seemed to be bored by no subject except philosophy (DNN). Monnington recalled doing the drawing of J. J. as a particularly memorable and happy occasion. It was also an influential one. Thomson, whom he continued to visit, first stimulated in Monnington that interest in nuclear physics which he expressed over twenty years later, in his designs for the Bristol ceiling (cat.nos. 129-133).

Lent by the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery

167 Portrait study for Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Jellicoe, circa 1932

Signed, black chalk, 28 x 20.6cm / 11 x 8¼in

Monnington's controversial portrait of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe was exhibited at the RA in 1934 (426, 40 x 50 ins., reproduced RA Illustrated, 1934, pl. 26). The portrait was commissioned for presentation to HMS Excellent to commemorate the centenary of its establishment of the Gunnery School at Whale Island. It was at first accepted by the mess; but on objections from Lady Jellicoe, it was rejected. R. G. Eves was commissioned to paint a more acceptable portrait; Monnington's languished in his studio until 1960, when he sold it for £100 to the National Maritime Museum.



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168 Winifred Knights, 1934

Signed and dated, pencil, 24.1 x 30.5cm / 9½ x 12in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (29)

This drawing was made in the year in which Knights completed her painting for the Milner Memorial Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral, and in which her son John was born.

Lent by John Monnington

169 Tonks on his deathbed, 8th January 1937

Signed, inscribed *Henry Tonks at the Vale*, pencil,

32.7 x 48.5cm / 12¾ x 19¼in

Exhibited: *The Slade, 1871–1971*, Royal Academy, 1971 (12); Monnington, 1977 (30)

LITERATURE: Andrew Forge, *The Slade*, 3, in *Motif*, 6, Spring 1961, fig. 5

Henry Tonks (1862–1937), draughtsman, painter of figure subjects and Slade Professor 1918–30, trained as a surgeon but gave up medicine to join the staff of the Slade in 1893. Autocratic, sardonic but above all stimulating, Tonks dominated the Slade during his professorship. He consistently preached the doctrine that draughtsmanship underlies all art. Both Monnington and his first wife Winifred Knights were among his pupils at the Slade, and from 1928 until Tonks' death in 1937 they lived on the ground floor of 1 The Vale, Tonks' house in Chelsea.

Tonks died on 8 January 1937. Shortly before his death, his housekeeper Miss Gough wrote Mr Monnington will make a drawing of him when all is over, and Mr Gerrard will make a death mask... There is no drawing of him anywhere. I mean a good drawing of his wonderful head. He looks very happy and peaceful, just quietly sleeping. (Joseph Hone, *Henry Tonks*, 1939, p. 318)

Lent by the College Art Collections, University of London

170 The Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, 1945

Signed with initials, pencil, 26 x 17.5cm / 10¼ x 6¾in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (59)

David Robert Alexander Lindsay, 28th Earl of Crawford and 11th Earl of Balcarres (1900–1975), was one of Monnington's oldest friends. They first met in Italy in 1923 when Crawford (then Lord Balniel) was Honorary Attaché in Rome. (see cat. no. 6). Their friendship continued to the end of their lives, when Crawford was Chairman of the National Art-Collections Fund (on whose executive Monnington served

for 35 years) and Monnington President of the Royal Academy. The news of Crawford's death on 13 December 1975 filled Monnington with sadness. He himself died within a month.

Crawford devoted his life to the service of the arts; he was associated, in several cases as Chairman, with the National Gallery, British Museum, Tate Gallery, National Galleries and Library of Scotland, the Fine Arts Commission, the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, the National Trust, the Pilgrim Trust and the National Art-Collections Fund.

Private Collection

171 Sir Evelyn Shaw, 1947

Signed and inscribed *Presented by the Rome Scholars' Society/1947*

Pencil, 33 x 24.1cm / 13 x 9½in

PROVENANCE: Mrs J. Romer-Lee, the sitter's daughter

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (60)

Sir Evelyn Campbell Shaw KCVO LLD (1882–1974) was assistant secretary, 1910–47, of the Royal Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851, and Honorary General Secretary of the British School at Rome from 1911 until his retirement in 1947, when the Rome Scholars' Society presented him with this drawing. It was as a young Rome Scholar that Monnington first met Shaw, twenty years his senior; this blossomed into a lifelong friendship. Knights and Monnington frequently visited Shaw in West Somerton, staying in his seashore cottage at Horsey. (see cat. no. 85.). Through his administration of scholarships and bursaries, Shaw was closely involved with practical support for science and the arts: a man of keen perception and sound judgment, he was much more than an able administrator. Monnington contributed an obituary notice of Shaw to *The Times* (30 January 1974), singling out as Shaw's chief contribution to life his ability to detect honesty of purpose and to encourage the creative capability of others.

Lent by John Monnington

172 Evelyn Monnington, 1948

Chalk, 33 x 25.4cm / 13 x 10in

EXHIBITED: Monnington, 1977 (61)

This is one of several studies of the artist's second wife Evelyn, whom he married in 1947; their son James was born in 1952. Née Hunt, she trained as a fabric designer at The Royal College of Art and worked during the war for the Civil Defence Camouflage Establishment (from November 1939), based at Leomington Spa, and later as a crew member of a canal boat.

Lent by Lady Monnington

ALFRED KINGSLEY LAWRENCE 1893–1975

173 Full length portrait of Monnington, 1924

Signed, dated and inscribed

Pencil, squared for transfer,

sight size 29.9 x 55.9cm / 11¾ x 22in

This portrait was later incorporated into Lawrence's Bank of England Mural, *The Old Thread Needle Street Court Yard*, with the Guard arriving at the Bank, 1931.

Lawrence also incorporated a self portrait and portraits of Colin Gill, and D. Y. Cameron amongst the crowd.

Lent by John Monnington



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RODNEY BURN 1899-1984

Camouflage seemed easy in the evening and a good time was had by all; But the nights at the White House were restless ones

Pen and ink over pencil, 14.5 x 18.5 cm / 5 7/8 x 7 1/4 in

Two cartoons from a sketch book entitled: *The Avonmouth and other adventures.*

In the first cartoon Monnington is shown playing darts with Leon Underwood seated at the bar and Rodney Burn standing. In the second cartoon Monnington is shown sitting up in bed with Leon Underwood holding a candle and Rodney Burn asleep.

Reproduced courtesy of Rosamond Malpas

Chronology

PAUL LISS

2 OCTOBER 1902

Born London. Father barrister. Grows up in Sussex; attends prep school at St Peter's, Seaford and Brunswick School, Haywards Heath.

1915

Develops heart trouble - formal education cut short; encouraged by mother (herself trained in painting in Paris) to study Clausen's and Tonks' *Elementary Propositions in Drawing and Painting* (1911).

1916

1 1/2 years at Farm School near Ross-on-Wye - develops love of agriculture and spends spare time drawing trees - a fascination apparent throughout his life.

PRE-1918

Enrols briefly at Hassall's Drawing School and the London School of Art.

JANUARY 1918

Enrols at The Slade, (aged 15) - studies under Fred Brown, Henry Tonks, Walter Westley Russell and Philip Wilson Steer.

1921

Awarded First Prize for Figure Painting, (shared with Rodney Burn).

1922

First Prize for Head Drawing, Winter - winning submission for the British School at Rome Scholarship in Decorative Painting (judged by John Singer Sargent, D. Y. Cameron and George Clausen).

JANUARY 1923

Arrives at The British School in Rome.

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1923

Travels in the North of Italy; spends one month in Florence, studying especially in the Uffizi. Visits Pisa, Arezzo, Perugia, Assisi, and Orvieto.

MAY 1923

Selects Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, Borghese Gallery as first year copy. Commissioned by Lord Balmiel (later Earl of Crawford and Balcarres) to paint *The Wine Press*.

AUGUST 1923

Asks painting faculty at BSR for permission to abandon copy of *Sacred and Profane Love* in favour of early 15th century fresco of Entombment, by unknown artist, in local museum at Spoleto, declaring it 'much more interesting and beautiful to my mind'.

SPRING 1924

Begins studies for *Allegory*.

23 APRIL 1924

Marries Winifred Knights at the British Consulate in Rome.

JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1924

Rents top floor of villa at Piediluco, Umbria.

MARCH 1925

Paints *Piediluco*; begins painting *Allegory*.

APRIL - OCTOBER 1925

Painting and cartoon for *Winter* exhibited at the *British Section of the International*

Exhibition of Modern and Decorative Industrial Art, Paris, Grand Palais (309).

END 1925

Returns to England; next few years lives at 33A Oxford Road, Putney; two days a week teaching at RCA (William Rothenstein, Principal; Allan Gwynne-Jones, Professor of Painting). Receives commission to paint Mural for St. Stephen's Hall, Westminster. The English and Scottish Commissioners present to Queen Anne at St. James Palace the Articles of the Agreement for the Parliamentary Union of the two Countries. Begins work January 1926. Unveiled 27 June 1927, although still unfinished.

1926

Joins Faculty of Painting BSR.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1927

Two cartoons for *Allegory* exhibited at The Galleries of the Secession, Vienna.

3 JANUARY 1928

First child still-born.

MARCH 1928

Moves to Studio A. 1 The Vale, the ground floor of Tonks' house in Chelsea.

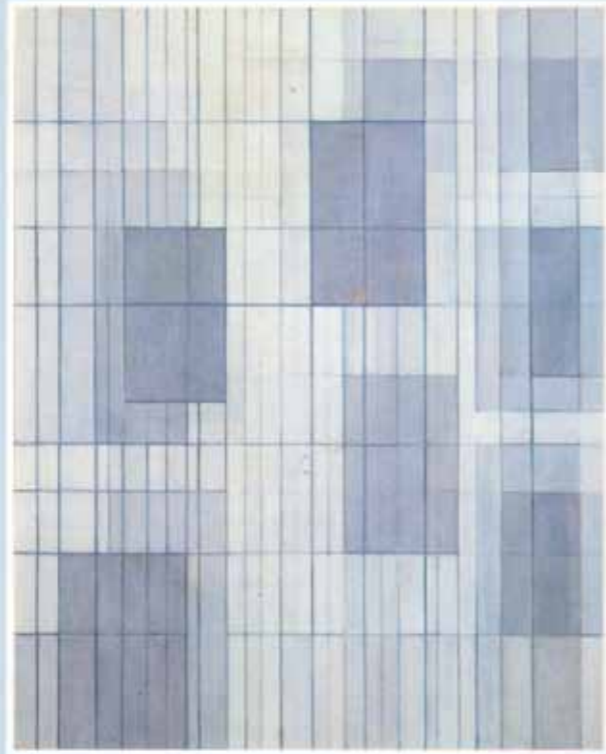
MARCH 1928

Commissioned by Bank of England: *A Director Announcing the Bank Rate to the Chief Officials* (exhibited RA 1932); *The Doorkeeper receiving a Message in the Entrance to the Parlours*; *St Luke's Printing Works*, completed October 1937.

1929

Joins NEAC - resigns 1931, having not exhibited there.

- 1930
Portrait of Lord Jellicoe.
- 1931
Completes *Supper at Emmaus*, Ormrod Chapel, Bolton.
First exhibited at RA - three drawings including study for *Supper at Emmaus*.
Elected ARA.
Appointed first Assistant Teacher of Painting in the Royal Academy: 'I think I shall like the work,' Monnington wrote to his brother Meredith (14.31), 'there are only 50 or 60 students so I shall be able to take more interest in them: at the R.A. there were about 500. Also I shall not have to confine myself to the drawing alone but will attend to the painting and composition as well.'
- 1932
Commissioned by Contemporary Portraits Fund to make portrait drawings of Sir James Barrie and Sir J. J. Thomson.
- MAY 1932
Commences portrait of Prime Minister Baldwin as Chancellor of Cambridge University.
- 1934
Portrait of *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe* exhibited at RA (Acquired by National Maritime Museum, 1960.)
- 1 JUNE 1934
Son John born.
- 8 JANUARY 1937
Death of Tonks.
Moves to Leyswood.
- JUNE 1938
Elected a full Academician.
- 1939
Piediluco exhibited as RA Diploma Work.
- MAY 1939
Joins the design team of the Civil Defence Camouflage Establishment, based at Leamington Spa, alongside fellow artists Rodney Burn and Leon Underwood: first task to camouflage Brooklands race-track. For next four years chiefly responsible for the design of the camouflage for aircraft production airfields. By August 1943 over 600 hours of flying time.
- 1939
Altar piece for Church House.
- NOVEMBER 1943
Appointed Official War Artist. Attached to training squadron of heavy bombers in Yorkshire; then to a squadron of Mitchell bombers with which he flies on raids over enemy territory; spent last winter of the war in Holland with No.83 Group of the 2nd Tactical Air Force.
- 1944
Produces *Southern England and Tempets Attacking Flying Bombs*.
- 1945-1972
Executive Committee BSR.
- 1945-49
Teaches at Camberwell Art School.
- 7 FEBRUARY 1947
Death of Winifred Knights.
- 6 DECEMBER 1947
Marries Evelyn Hunt.
- 1948
Bull Finches Farm exhibited at RA.
- 1948-1967
Chairman of faculty of painting BSR.
- 1949-67
Persuaded to accept teaching post at Slade by newly appointed Slade professor William Coldstream.
- 19 JULY 1952
Son James born.
- 1953
Commissioned to paint ceiling of Conference Hall in Vincent Harris's Council House in Bristol. Work commenced April 1954; completed 2 years later.
- 1956
Suffers heart attack.
Begins designs for ceiling of Mary Harris Memorial Chapel, Exeter.
- 1957
Elected fellow of UCL.
- 1959
Commences *Stations of the Cross for Brede Parish Church*.
- 1963
Appointed Trustee of the British Museum.
- 1964
Commences first of two murals for University of London, Students Union.
- 6 DECEMBER 1966
Elected FBA. Exhibitions under his presidency include *Bauhaus 1968*, *Big Paintings for Public Places*, 1969; and *British Sculptors '72*.
- 1967
Knighted.
Square Design purchased by Tate Gallery.
- 10 DECEMBER 1968
Queen attends Special Bicentenary Dinner at RA.
- DECEMBER 1975
I have agreed to do one more year at the RA - that is if I survive that long - but it is now definitely understood that this will be my last year as President. (letter to Meredith Monnington)
- 7 JANUARY 1976
Dies.
- OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1977
Monnington Retrospective held at Royal Academy, comprising 61 works - remarkably the first exhibition devoted to him.



THE FINE ART SOCIETY PLC
AND PAUL LISS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE
BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME