WHOSE HERITAGE? RESEARCH RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

A Culture& programme offering residencies to new diverse arts professionals at leading arts and heritage organisations.

January 2021 – November 2021

Programme Manager
Sandra Shakespeare
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‘Unless the younger generation has access to...cultural repertoires and can understand and practice them, to some extent at least, from the inside, they will lack the resources – the cultural capital – of their own 'heritage', as a base from which to engage other traditions.’

Stuart Hall (1999) 'Whose heritage? un-settling 'The Heritage', re-imagining the Post-nation’ Third Text 49: 3-13,
THE OPEN CALL

Sandra

Whose Heritage? Residencies were undertaken by New Museum School graduates at the following National Trust sites: Sutton House, 575 Wandsworth Road in London, Runnymede & Ankwerwyke and Clandon Park in Surrey. Online organisations Art UK and the Collections Trust and Milton’s Cottage Museum in Buckinghamshire. Researchers brought diverse perspectives to specific areas of research at each organisation. Each researcher was mentored by curatorial, research, or interpretation staff in their quest to reveal new narratives behind objects and sites to connect meaningfully with diverse audiences - those communities who might not feel the collections or sites are ‘for them’.

INTERSECTIONALITY
DECOLONISATION
ACTIVISM

Residencies allowed researchers creative opportunities for the interrogation language and terminology, traditionally used when classifying or describing objects. The reports capture this tension with contemporary forms of decolonisation practice to challenge accepted institutional practice. For example: Sutton House’s intangible history linked to ‘squatter activism’ explored local communities and new insights conveyed through archives, protest banners and posters through a digital zine. This ezine also speaks to Gen Z, the accessibility and consumption of heritage through online digital media expressed through non-conformist DIY art forms.

Or with Art UK and research into Bi-visibility: the importance of bisexual+ representation in UK art collections. At 575 Wandsworth Road research and re-interpretation of the times and life of the owner Khadambi Asalache will help enhance and understand how BAME visitors experience topophilia at this site. Whose Heritage? Residencies:

- Revealed new narratives behind objects, collections, sites, and monuments in ways that connect meaningfully with diverse audiences
- Brought new research and interpretation to heritage assets
- Illustrated the value of a diverse workforce
- Supported the careers of graduates through an outcome driven residency with leading heritage organisations
- Shared knowledge with the wider sector with work and outcomes on a new online platform this provides the context for the broader debate of diversity issues across the arts and heritage sector.
Tabitha’s interests are in community engagement, queer histories and public programming in museums. A graduate of the New Museum School, Tabitha has worked at Keats House, the Migration Museum and is currently working in visitor experience and engagement at Wellcome Collection. She studied Social Anthropology and South Asian Studies at SOAS, University of London. In their spare time, Tabitha volunteers for a grassroots community group and is involved in union organising.
Bi visibility: Dora Carrington and multiple gender attraction

Research project by Tabitha Deadman for Art UK as part of the Whose Heritage? residencies in partnership with Culture&.

Dora Carrington, who liked to be referred to by only her surname, was a painter and designer. She attended the Slade School of Art in 1910 where she was introduced to the bohemian lifestyle and also the Bloomsbury Group, a set of friends who were artists, writers and intellectuals. It has been said that Carrington was always on the periphery of the group, but she gained further access through her relationship with the writer Lytton Strachey.
Dora Carrington c.1910

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)
National Portrait Gallery, London
Whilst Gwen John's multiple gender attraction is more difficult to find in her biographies, Carrington's sexuality has been explored further. This may be due to Carrington's connection to the Bloomsbury Group, who are known for their more open approach to relationships. Carrington's attraction to multiple genders has usually been framed as a troubled relationship with her sexuality but this narrative is clouded in misunderstandings and stereotypes around bisexuality.

Female Figure Standing 1913

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)

UCL Culture
Carrington’s time at the Slade was influential in her life in terms of her identity. Her drawings and paintings of naked women were considered controversial at the time. Women at the Slade were only able to paint the half-clothed male form, and so her choice to paint nude women was a bold decision.

We can see from paintings made during her time at the Slade that Carrington had an interest in painting people. Even in paintings made in later life, such as *Spanish Landscape with Mountains*, the land itself looks like shapely human curves. Throughout her life, she illustrated her letters with pictures of naked women.

![Spanish Landscape with Mountains](image)

**Spanish Landscape with Mountains** c.1924

**Dora Carrington (1893–1932)**

Tate

During her time at the Slade, she was pursued by Mark Gertler, who also studied there a few years prior. From letters sent from Carrington to Gertler, we can see that Carrington enjoyed her relationship with him but did not want to pursue it sexually.
Mark Gertler  c.1909–1911

Dora Carrington (1893–1932) (possibly)
National Portrait Gallery, London
Carrington possibly drew this portrait of Gertler whilst she was studying at the Slade. The angle of Gertler’s pose and the expression on his face shows vulnerability and tenderness. We could read affection for him in this painting but, knowing the context of her relationship, it is also clearly not a sexually charged depiction. She wrote:

'Only I cannot love you as you want me to. You must know one could not do, what you ask, sexual intercourse, unless one does love a man’s body. I have never felt any desire for that in my life...'

Lytton Strachey 1914

Henry Lamb (1883–1960)
Tate
After her time at the Slade, she was introduced to members of the Bloomsbury Group including Lytton Strachey. Carrington and Strachey's relationship is a wonderful example of the fluidity of sexuality and non-monogamy. Strachey's feelings towards Carrington were considered unusual for him by his fellow members of the Bloomsbury Group as he predominantly had relationships with men.

Carrington's attraction to Strachey has hardly been thoroughly questioned – as it represents a heterosexual desire on her behalf. There are undertones of bisexual erasure in these interpretations, as these reduce Strachey's feelings towards Carrington as a phase in his homosexuality, despite Carrington and himself living together for the rest of their lives.

With the age difference between Carrington and Strachey and the lack of sexual relations between them, their relationship has often been labelled as platonic. Their relationship highlights that whilst Strachey may not have been sexually attracted to women, his relationship with Carrington shows that there are differences between romantic and sexual attraction. His letters to her are full of warmth and intimacy and we can read a romantic affection towards her. He wrote:

'You do know very well that I love you as something more than a friend, you angelic creature, whose goodness to me has made me happy for years, and whose presence in my life has been and always will be, one of the most important things in my life...'

Lytton Strachey

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)

National Portrait Gallery, London
In Carrington’s painting *Lytton Strachey*, there is a level of intimacy in the detail of this work which suggests a closeness between the model and the painter. There is a sense of familiarity in the way Carrington has highlighted certain features of Strachey such as the hands and details of the face. Rather than a forced pose, this position of Strachey lying in bed is natural. This offers an insight into their relationship and what could be imagined to be a regular pastime – Carrington painting and Strachey writing or reading. In her diary, Virginia Woolf wrote:

‘After tea Lytton and Carrington left the room ostensibly to copulate; but suspicion was aroused by a measured sound proceeding from the room, and on listening at the keyhole it was discovered that they were reading aloud Macaulay’s Essays!’

In 1918, Carrington met Ralph Partridge who soon became a lover to both Carrington and Strachey. Carrington agreed to marry Partridge in 1922 and they lived together as a ménage à trois (where a married couple lives with a lover). For Partridge, it is only through his relationship with Strachey that he explored ‘homosexual behaviour’ and Frances Marshall, who married Partridge after Carrington, claims that he was heterosexual. Using binary language, homosexual and heterosexual, doesn’t allow the acknowledgement that people can be attracted to more than one gender. During this time, Carrington, Partridge and Strachey had a range of relationships with other people.
Farm at Watendlath 1921

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)
Tate

Carrington painted this landscape showing the farm where she and Partridge stayed on their honeymoon.
Scene from the Strachey Gramophone c.1925

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)
Portsmouth Museums and Visitor Services
Several of Carrington’s works are portraits of people in her life. This highlights how important connecting with others was to her, and yet she struggled to find the balance between making those around her happy and doing creative work. Moving in with Strachey and Partridge, Carrington took on many domestic duties to maintain the house and show her desire to please those around her. This also comes across in her work: her illustrated letters, her interior design of the property, her designs for her friends – such as the gramophone she painted for Alix Strachey, Lytton’s sister – and a painting on glass gifted to her friend Iris Tree, who was a poet and actress.

Iris Tree on a Horse  c.1920s

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)
The Ingram Collection of Modern British and Contemporary Art

After a few years of marriage to Partridge, Carrington met Henrietta Bingham. In a letter, she wrote that Henrietta was ‘my style, pink with a round face, dressed in mannish clothes, with a good natural smile’. It is a joy to read Carrington’s letters, especially in the way she writes to others about her feelings towards Henrietta. At a birthday party for the artist Duncan Grant, Carrington met Henrietta again and wrote to her lover Gerald Brenan, ‘I became completely drunk and almost made love to her in public.’

You can sense the excitement in Carrington’s words in the way she writes about her attraction to Henrietta. There is something thrilling in being able to read what Carrington experienced, accessing a part of herself that she hasn’t physically expressed before. In a letter to her friend Alix Strachey: ‘Really I confess Alix I am very much more taken with H than I have been
with anyone for a long time. I feel now regrets being such a blasted fool in the past, to stifle so many lusts I had in my youth for various females.’ It seems from this letter that Henrietta was the first woman that Carrington felt comfortable exploring her attraction to women, despite having these feelings for others before.

Gerald Brenan 1921

Dora Carrington (1893–1932)
National Portrait Gallery, London
One of Carrington’s partners was the writer Gerald Brenan. This portrait was painted during their relationship, again highlighting her use of art to acknowledge the significant relationships throughout her adult years. In one of her letters to Brenan, she writes that ‘...it would have been easier if I had been completely Lesbian’. The use of ‘completely Lesbian’ highlights this unease of not fitting into the binary of ‘heterosexual’ or ‘lesbian’, but also how there didn’t seem to be an appropriate term at the time for a person who experiences multiple gender attraction.

In 1932, as Strachey’s health was deteriorating from cancer, Carrington attempted to take her own life. It seems the thought of living without Lytton was too much for Carrington to bear. A few weeks after his death, Carrington died by suicide at the age of 38. Carrington’s relationship with Strachey was significant to her life, but in a similar way to the narrative of Gwen John’s, the typical focus on this relationship meant other aspects of her life have been overlooked and unexplored. This is evidenced in the 1995 film Carrington, which portrays the relationship between Strachey and Carrington and does not mention her attraction to women. This choice reinforces the harmful narrative that women’s heterosexual relationships are the most central aspects of their lives.

Female Figure Lying on Her Back 1912
Dora Carrington (1893–1932)
UCL Culture

Carrington’s intimate letters allow us rich insight into her relationships and art. However, there needs to be an important shift in the common narrative that Carrington was ‘confused’. Personally, I don’t think she was confused by her sexuality, but that research has been influenced by the stigma associated with people attracted to multiple genders. This stigma is rooted in a fixed idea of heterosexual/homosexual binary that relies on the assumption
that people attracted to multiple genders will gravitate towards these binary identities at some point. There is also a stereotype of promiscuity and bisexuality, and in examples such as Carrington, we see multiple gender attraction and consensual non-monogamy together.

Through the variety of visual and verbal works, we have access to only a glimpse of her life and her understanding of herself. There is so much more to explore in Carrington’s multiple gender attraction in her life and art and an important opportunity to dismantle many biphobic stereotypes.
Bi visibility: Gwen John and multiple gender attraction

Research project by Tabitha Deadman for Art UK as part of the Whose Heritage? residencies in partnership with Culture&.

Gwen John, born in Wales in 1876, is known for her oil paintings of women, cats and interiors. John gained more recognition after her death and she became a prominent figure in feminist art critique. With the first major exhibition looking at queer British art only happening in 2017, it is unsurprising that there has been little discussion about John’s work and her attraction to multiple genders. By highlighting this part of her identity, we can resist bisexual erasure within the art world.
Whose Heritage? Research Residency Programme

Self-Portrait 1902
Gwen John (1876–1939)
Tate
Most discussions of John’s life skim over her sexuality. In 1985 the Barbican held one of the largest exhibitions on the artist but the exhibition catalogue makes no mention of her attraction to women. It is not clear if the feelings she had towards women were reciprocated but it does not mean that these feelings and emotions are not important to understanding John’s life and her art.

Many of the biographies written about John have been shaped by her writing. John wrote countless letters to friends and lovers that offer us another biographical perspective of her life besides her artwork. Many of her letters are at the National Library of Wales. It is through these letters that we know of Gwen John’s relationships with men and women.

The Little Interior 1920-1925

Gwen John (1876–1939)
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

Biographers and researchers have explored John’s fondness of spending time alone, analysing this in many ways – especially how quiet interiors are the focus of many of her artworks. She has been written about as ‘chaste, subdued and sad’.
A Corner of the Artist's Room in Paris 1907–1909

Gwen John (1876–1939)
Museums Sheffield

John moved to Paris in 1904 and never properly returned to London. It was around this time that the ‘New Woman’ emerged – women were living more independently, questioning
inequality and had more sexual freedom. John, in moving to Paris and living alone, had the opportunity to explore the freedom of living in a different country, experimenting with art and meeting new people. There is much to suggest that she was not isolated but valued her independence, and through her writing we can read of her adventures in Paris modelling for artists, meeting friends, painting and walking the streets of the city. Her independence challenges the idea that a woman cannot enjoy living alone: an assumption that a woman’s relationship with a man makes her life fulfilling.

Gwen John was exploring the city as a new woman, taking part in what was known as a ‘bohemian’ lifestyle where artists and creatives could explore unconventional ways of living. Paris in the early twentieth century was a place where women who were attracted to women were able to explore their sexuality in the range of bars, cafés and restaurants, and at the exclusive salons held by women at this time. There is no concrete evidence to suggest that John attended these places but the people she met and her association with bohemians suggests she knew of this subculture.
John is often described as being overshadowed by the men in her life, both during her life and after her death. Her brother Augustus John was a well-known artist who attended the Slade a few years earlier than Gwen. Augustus claims to have known that Gwen was a better
artist than himself. It was in his autobiography that he writes of his sister’s romantic interest in a fellow student called 'Elinor':

‘One of my sister’s unhappy crossings in love led to a drama. She had a great friend at the Slade, a certain girl student whom I will call Elinor. Elinor had formed a close attachment to an outsider... Gwen decided that this affair must be stopped; so, after failing to persuade her friend to break it off, she announced her ultimatum – surrender or suicide.’
A Lady Reading 1909–11

Gwen John (1876–1939)

Tate
Gwen John is also known as the lover of the famous French sculptor Auguste Rodin. A Lady Reading has been read as a self-portrait of John waiting for Rodin to come to her apartment, as similarities can be seen between the figure in the painting and Rodin’s sculpture for which John modelled. The interior in this painting is John’s room in Paris, and you can see a pen and paper on the writing desk.

The main subject of discussion regarding John’s love life has been her relationship with Rodin, and whilst they were not always romantically involved they were still in contact until he died in 1917. Although we can't deny that this decade-long relationship was an important one, his fame and John’s position as a female artist may have somewhat exaggerated his influence on her art and life. Rodin’s death is considered the point when her life changes: she finds Catholicism and spends the rest of her days as a recluse.
Head of Gwen John (1876–1939) (Head of Whistler’s Muse) / Pen Gwen John (1876–1939) (Pen Awen Whistler) 1904

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)
Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
However, we know from her letters that she formed strong attachments to women after this time. Susan Chitty writes in her biography of John that she had ‘a passing feeling for an Englishwoman called Nona’, whose identity is unknown. We also know that John became infatuated with Vera Oumançoff. These letters defy the notion of John's reclusivity, a perspective that again relies on heteronormative understandings of relationships.

Her attraction to people has been often described as intense. She was known to have written to Rodin most days, calling him ‘master’ and signing off her letters using the name ‘Marie’, possibly a term reserved for people she was romantically involved with. She is said to have followed Vera Oumançoff home from Mass every Monday, writing her frequent letters and drawing her pictures. Gwen John also asked Vera to call her ‘Marie’.

Gwen John (1876–1939) 1905

Mary Constance Lloyd (active 1903–1920)  
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / The National Library of Wales

John was friends with the artist Mary Constance Lloyd. The pair met during their time at the Slade. They became lifelong friends and Lloyd owned several of John’s works. Lloyd also moved to Paris and in 1905 she painted this nude of Gwen John in that year. John apparently
preferred modelling for women artists. There are a few letters exchanged between the two. In one, John wrote: 'I came home from being with you this morning with my big roll of English Literature. I put it on the table and sat by it and thought of you and was not lonely. Now it is evening and I still don't want to read.'

Can we read something further into this relationship through this painting? Whether an intimate friendship or more, Lloyd’s painting shows us another side to Gwen John. Compared to John’s self-portraits especially, this painting is lighter and softer. John has no features on her face yet this painting feels like we are being intrusive, catching John in a private moment.
Young Woman Holding a Black Cat  c.1920–5

Gwen John (1876–1939)

Tate
John chose to focus on painting women, rooms and cats. Some of the paintings are of her own rooms, highlighting the importance of her own personal space, with cats as her companions. John does not paint any portraits of men and chooses to focus on women. As she modelled herself during her time in Paris (which is how she met Rodin), she may have found the process of painting women easier and more interesting. The women in her paintings are not as passive as they first seem: they are often holding books and reading.
Looking at *Nude Girl*, there are so many layers to this piece of work. There is an intimacy in this painting between the viewer and the model, and the seated position and the model’s stare both suggest confidence. John joined the Slade as one of the first female art students to be able to participate in life-drawing classes. It is a painting of a woman by a woman, therefore we are not viewing the model through the male gaze. Many believe John disliked Fenella Lovell, who modelled for this painting. She said: ‘It is a great strain doing Fenella. It is a pretty little face but she is dreadful.’ This portrait offers a perspective on the feminist ideal of the ‘New Woman’ and John’s attraction to women. There is a depth to this painting beyond eroticism: it can be read as sexualised, but it is not the only way to see the subject.
Chloë Boughton-Leigh 1904–8

Gwen John (1876–1939)

Tate
John used the same models again and again. We have Ellen Theodosia Boughton-Leigh, known as Chloë, who appears in various paintings by John.
She also painted Dorelia McNeil, a friend she studied at the Slade with, and who also walked with her from London to Rome in 1903. Gwen introduced Dorelia to her brother Augustus who formed a ménage à trois with her and his wife, Ida Nettleship. It has been suggested that John herself had romantic feelings towards Doreila. Comparing this to *Nude Girl*, there is a warmness to this painting of Dorelia. Her gaze is soft but alluring and there is a vulnerability in her pose. Augustus John used Dorelia as a model for many artworks, but this painting by Gwen offers an affection towards Dorelia that I don't see in her brother's work.

Interpretations of Gwen John's life have altered significantly over the years – from seeing her as a recluse and overshadowed by her brother, to a more feminist perspective where her independence is celebrated. However, there is more work to be done: a queer lens allows us to understand John's independence and perceived reclusivity in a more nuanced way.
Gwen John c.1900

Gwen John (1876–1939)
National Portrait Gallery, London
Exploring John’s relationships helps to diversify the narratives of multiple gender attraction. Often bisexual+ people are portrayed as selfish or greedy, unable to control their sexual attraction because the opportunities for romantic and sexual relationships are considered endless. John had a series of strong emotional attachments to both men and women within her life and for many, we do not know how reciprocated these feelings were. Her relationship with Rodin was monumental both personally and creatively, but by making this relationship more significant than other relationships, we run the risk of erasing her multiple gender attraction and continuing to promote heterosexuality above all else.
Bi visibility: Marie Laurencin and multiple gender attraction

Research project by Tabitha Deadman for Art UK as part of the Whose Heritage? residencies in partnership with Culture&.

Marie Laurencin was one of the most brilliant avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century. As a woman, her work was often not regarded as highly as that of her contemporaries in the Cubist movement. Her art was influenced by both Cubism and Fauvism but did not align fully with these movements and took on a unique style of its own. Laurencin’s subjects were mainly portraits of women, and her choice of colours and imagery offer a dream-like feminine utopia.
Vase de fleurs 1920s

Marie Laurencin (1883–1956)
Royal Academy of Music
Laurencin achieved success during her lifetime with her art and was considered one of the ‘four queens of French culture’ alongside the writer Colette, designer Coco Chanel and actress Valentine Tessier. Her life was in the public sphere due to her fame and her associations with other prominent people at the time. Laurencin’s work has been both explored from a feminist and queer perspective in recent years and it is interesting to see how her life and work give us insight into queer subculture in twentieth-century Paris.

Laurencin was one of the only women in the creative collective of artists and writers known as Section d’Or. Laurencin often made reference to the gender divide and how being a woman set her work apart from other artists at the time. She once said: ‘Cubism has poisoned three years of my life, preventing me from doing any work... As long as I was influenced by the great men surrounding me I could do nothing.’

Critics have said that her works rely too much on gendered stereotypes of fragile femininity to be considered feminist, while others have said that her work subverted the prescribed masculinity of artist communities. Being one of the few well-known female artists at the time, her emphasis on gender was an important way to highlight that women can make art just as well as men and offered depictions of women outside of the male gaze.
Depuis ce jour fatal (Since that Fatal Day) 1912

Marie Laurencin (1883–1956)
Pallant House Gallery

Laurencin's relationship with poet Guillaume Apollinaire is considered one of the focal points in her life. During their relationship, she was more commonly known as Appolinaire’s muse than as an independent artist. He often said that Laurencin was 'me in feminine form'. *Apollinaire and his Friends* is considered to be her most famous painting and depicts
her lover and his friends, including Picasso. This work is not in the distinctive style she is known for but its success may be because of whom this painting portrays.

With her marriage with Otto van Watjen and high-profile relationship with Apollinaire, there is more discussion about Laurencin’s relationships with men. She was known for her open attitude and to have relations with people of different genders. Biographies and interpretation have refrained from labelling Laurencin's sexuality and have often acknowledged her multiple gender attraction. Her artistic style and depictions of women perhaps reflect explorations of her sexuality.
La guitare shows a woman with flowers in her hair looking at the viewer. The pose of the woman is playful, with her hand on her hip. The expression on her face is mischievous and there is an emphasis on her seductive eyes in contrast with her pale skin. There is an erotic energy to this painting through body language and the pink material held in the woman’s left hand. Laurencin’s paintings from around this time often depict women with instruments, in groups or dancing. Laurencin was very open about her preference for painting women – she said: ‘I feel perfectly at ease with everything that is feminine’.

The Fan (L’Eventail) c.1919

Marie Laurencin (1883–1956)
Tate

The Fan depicts two women in picture frames on a table. This work was completed while Laurencin was in Spain during the First World War with her husband Otto van Watjen. Many
say that Laurencin painted herself as the woman in the oval frame or mirror. It has been suggested that the woman in the frame with the dog is Nicole Groult, a dressmaker with whom Laurencin may have been in a relationship for several years.

The colour palette of blue, grey and pink shows the development of her new approach. It was during and just after her time in Spain that she explored this distinctive style and also began to focus on women. It is interesting to consider whether Laurencin found that being somewhere new allowed her more freedom to explore new ideas, or if her longing for Paris was inspiring her work.

Marie Laurencin in her atelier 1932, photograph by unknown artist

Laurencin was born and lived in Paris for the majority of her life. As we saw with Gwen John, being in Paris gave her the freedom and opportunity to explore a more unconventional lifestyle. Both Laurencin and John had different experiences of the city but it is interesting to explore if and how they related to the queer subcultures. What was it about Paris in the early twentieth century that allowed this queer bohemian space?

In France, homosexual acts were decriminalised in 1791 after the French Revolution. Of course, decriminalisation didn’t mean that attitudes in general society had majorly shifted but during La Belle Époque, the era known for cultural and artistic development in Paris, discretion allowed the underground LGBTQ+ scenes to flourish.
With the idea of the ‘New Woman’, and women taking on more roles during the war years, women became more independent. Paris’ Left Bank became the epicentre of queer expatriate women in Paris – there you could find book shops, bars or the design shop Jean Désert owned by Eileen Gray, who was also known to have had relationships with both men and women.

The Two Friends (Les Deux Amies) 1894

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901)

Tate
This image is painted by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, a painter known for spending time in the bohemian areas of Paris such as Montmartre. He started to draw the people he encountered, especially the sex workers in brothels he visited. This image, called *The Two Friends*, has obvious queer connotations with two women holding each other close.

It is clear that Laurencin’s gender was very entwined with how she was perceived as an artist, and it is not a surprise that Laurencin sought out to find other creative women that shared her experience. Laurencin became friends with Natalie Clifford Barney, a famous writer who had a reputation at the time for her same-sex interests. Barney ran salons every week in her house which became a regular place for women who were attracted to women to meet each other.

It was during this time that Laurencin met the legendary lesbian Gertrude Stein who bought one of her first artworks. It is interesting to consider that Laurencin’s openness about her sexuality and her associations with these people did not have a negative impact on her reputation or success.

In her later life, Laurencin was successful enough to buy her own property and lived with Suzanne Moreau, who she first employed as a maid. Many have suggested that Moreau was Laurencin’s partner although no evidence has been found to support this. Even though she was an adult, Laurencin adopted Moreau as her daughter a few years before her death, which meant she was the beneficiary of Laurencin’s property and money. Before marriage equality was more common, people in same-sex relationships did this to ensure their partners had legal rights (as explained in a *New York Times* article).

Moreau protected Laurencin’s letters and personal belongings from being viewed by the public and scholars. This is a reminder that whilst Laurencin lived this bohemian lifestyle in an unconventional setting, legally and socially, much of Paris and the wider world were less comfortable with same-sex relationships.
Marie Laurencin (1883–1956)

Of the three artists explored in this series, Marie Laurencin’s art has been my favourite with her unique depictions and interesting twists on portraying women in pastel. Laurencin’s paintings offer us an insight into sexuality that I personally can relate to. There is a fluidity to her work, the indistinctive shapes, delicate women and blend of colours creates a romantic vision and fantasy.

Despite the softness to the work, there is a real sense that Laurencin was confident and comfortable in her attraction to multiple genders, which may be attributed to her friends and the bohemian lifestyle she had built for herself. There is a sense that the sapphic subculture of Paris in the early twentieth century may be the closest reality she could get to the dreamy worlds she visualised in her paintings.
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