

WINIFRED GILL'S PRINTS AND TOY DESIGNS



Winifred Gill, *Design for Toy Figure: Castanet Dance*, c.1914
pencil and bodycolour on paper
© Samuel Courtauld Trust:
Pamela Diamand Bequest, 1958

Accompanying the exhibition *Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops*, on view from **18 June to 20 September 2009**, will be a special display of rarely seen works on paper by Winifred Gill (1891-1981), the unsung heroine of the Omega Workshops. The display celebrates the recent generous gift to The Courtauld Gallery of a substantial group of Gill's linocuts and woodblock prints by the artist's niece, Dr Margaret Bennett. Also on display will be a selection of Gill's colourful and imaginative toy designs, which form part of The Courtauld's existing holdings of the artist's work.

Winifred Gill was invited to join the newly formed Omega Workshops in 1913 by Roger Fry. As well as producing numerous designs for the Omega, she played a key role in running the Workshops in Fitzroy Square, acting as business manager after the start of the war until 1916. She is best known for her frequently quoted reminiscences on the personalities and day-to-day workings of the Omega. Her artwork, including paintings and prints, toys, marionettes, embroidered cushions and hand-painted domestic objects, is less widely known.

The Bennett Gift consists of forty-three linocuts and woodblock prints, most dating from the 1920s. Gill was taught to engrave on wood by Fry and a number of original blocks, trial proofs and hand-coloured versions reveal Gill's creative working process. Her bold compositions of simplified and often brightly coloured forms are rooted in the expressive artistic approaches of the Omega Workshops. These qualities are also powerfully demonstrated in her toy designs, produced during her time at the Omega. These fresh and highly original works comprise a variety of toy figures, including enchanting dancers and lively musicians, all intended to be produced in brightly painted wood with articulated joints.



Winifred Gill, *Olives*, c.1930s
linocut on paper
On loan from Dr Margaret Bennett

Dr Bennett's generous gift greatly enhances The Courtauld Gallery's holdings of work by Gill and enriches its important collection of works by artists of the Omega Workshops and the Bloomsbury Group.

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