Bloomsbury Group's Charleston unveils new space



Spiritual home of the Bloomsbury group, Charleston in Sussex Grace Towner/Charleston Trust

Tomorrow, the spiritual home of the Bloomsbury Group - Charleston in Sussex – will unveil a new National Lottery-supported exhibition space and two restored 18th-century barns.

With the help of £2.4million from National Lottery players, the Charleston site now has five exhibition galleries, an auditorium, a restaurant called The Threshing Barn and additional retail space. The inaugural exhibition in the new space will be Orlando at the Present Time, a contemporary response to Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography*.

[quote=Nathaniel Hepburn, Director and CEO, Charleston Turst]"Much like the artists who lived here, our programme will be radical, unconventional and international."[/quote]

Nathaniel Hepburn, Director and Chief Executive of the Charleston Trust, said: "Through these new facilities we can make the site into a public centre for thinking, making, writing and working. Much like the artists who lived here, our programme will be radical, unconventional and international."

Beautiful Bloomsbury

The Sussex home of artists Vanessa Bell (1879–1961) and Duncan Grant (1885–1978), Charleston is the only completely preserved Bloomsbury interior in the world. Since opening to the public in 1986, its delicate painted interiors and collection of furniture, textiles, books and ceramics have been enjoyed by over half a million people in the summer visitor season.

The ideas and radicalism of the artists, writers and intellectuals of the Bloomsbury group will be at the heart of Charleston's new programme, which will explore the contemporary relevance of those who lived and worked at Charleston over 100 years ago. The scope of the group's specialities, encompassing novelist Virginia Woolf, biographer Lytton Strachey and economist John Maynard Keynes, will allow for a wide range of themes including gender and sexual politics, pacifism and internationalism, interior design and fashion.

Taking inspiration from Orlando

The opening exhibition will bring together contemporary artistic responses to Virginia Woolf's landmark novel *Orlando* and will mark 90 years since its original publication. New works from Kaye Donachie, Paul Kindersley, Delaine La Bas and Matt Smith will be shown alongside rarely seen contemporary letters, photographs and objects.

Woolf's innovative use of a protagonist who appears to change gender has made *Orlando* an important reference point for those interested in gender and feminist theory and its re-examination at Charleston this autumn will connect both with the Bloomsbury group's queer history and discussions about gender.

Find out more on the Charleston website.

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