



MODERN MADE | Modern Art & Post-War Design (636)

Fri, 30th Apr 2021, Mall Galleries | London

Viewing Times:

[Book an Appt](#)

Viewing from 27-30 April at The Mall Galleries, London

Lot 158

Estimate: £4000 - £6000 + Fees

§ **Edward Wolfe R.A. (South African/British 1897-1982)**
Portrait of Pat Nelson, 1930s

signed (lower left), oil on canvas

94cm x 73cm (37in x 28.75in)

Exhibited:

Tate Britain, *Spaces of Black Modernism 1919-1939*, 2014-15;

Tate Britain, *Queer British Art 1861-1967*, 2017.

Literature:

Russell-Taylor, John, *Edward Wolfe*, Trefoil Books, London, 1986, p.199, no.180 (illustrated).

The Guardian also used this painting to illustrate Peter Tatchell's famous article 'Fifty years of gay liberation' on 23 May 2017.

'Edward Wolfe's portrait of Pat Nelson...explores the experiences of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds in London's art world between the wars. Nelson came to Britain in 1937 to work as a valet in Wales. In about 1938 he was studying law in London as well as working as an artist's model for Wolfe and Duncan Grant. He became Duncan Grant's lover in the late 1930s. Following the outbreak of the Second World War he enlisted with the Pioneer Corps, was posted to France with the British Expeditionary Force and was injured and captured near Dunkirk. He was held in various prison camps, including Stalag 344, until his release in late 1944. On his return he resumed his friendship with Duncan Grant, and they would write to each other over the next 25 years until Nelson's death in 1963'. (*A Model's Life, Spaces of Black Modernism*, Tate Britain)

'Wolfe's depiction of Nelson against the rich green background is exoticising and his pose invites the viewer to admire his body. Such objectification was typical of many depictions of black men from this time and reflects an uneven power dynamic, although Nelson's friendship with members of the Bloomsbury group adds a level of complexity to the relationship between artist and sitter'. (*Queer British Art*, Tate Britain)