

# Creative Livingz



Issue 1



Winter 2022



*Hello!*

Welcome to the first Paper Thin Moon Creative Living journal. We start in Winter, and January, the ultimate month for hibernation and laidback weekends spent at home. After the busy build up to the festive period, I like to take January at a much slower pace. For me, it's a time for lighting candles, slipping under a pile of blankets and eating hearty soups and stews that soothe the soul.

But I find those early, chilly months as a new year unfurls are also the perfect time for carving out space for creative endeavours, and to take some time out as we tentatively ease ourselves into a new year. I'll be spending my evenings revisiting an abandoned embroidery project and slowly working my way through a small stack of books I started and never quite finished in 2021 (the latter in a candlelit bath).

In this first edition of the journal, we're sharing images from a recent trip to the wonderfully inspiring Charleston House, former home of the Bloomsbury artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant; a chat with artist and mentor Abby Monroe, with a peak into her beautiful home studio, and a recipe that's become a firm winter favourite of mine: warming roasted cauliflower soup.

I hope this mini magazine can help inspire you to take some time to relax and indulge in some creative play time. Enjoy!

*Cade*



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# THE CHARM

# OF CHARLESTON

THE BOLD AND COLOURFUL DECORATING STYLE OF VANESSA BELL AND DUNCAN GRANT IS INSPIRING A NEW GENERATION OF DESIGNERS AND MAKERS. WE VISIT CHARLESTON HOUSE AND FIND THE COUPLE'S FORMER HOME ALIVE WITH THEIR VISIONARY SPIRIT

When the artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant moved to Charleston House in 1916, it became an important meeting place for the Bloomsbury Group; an influential collective of writers, intellectuals and artists who were at the vanguard of progressive British culture.

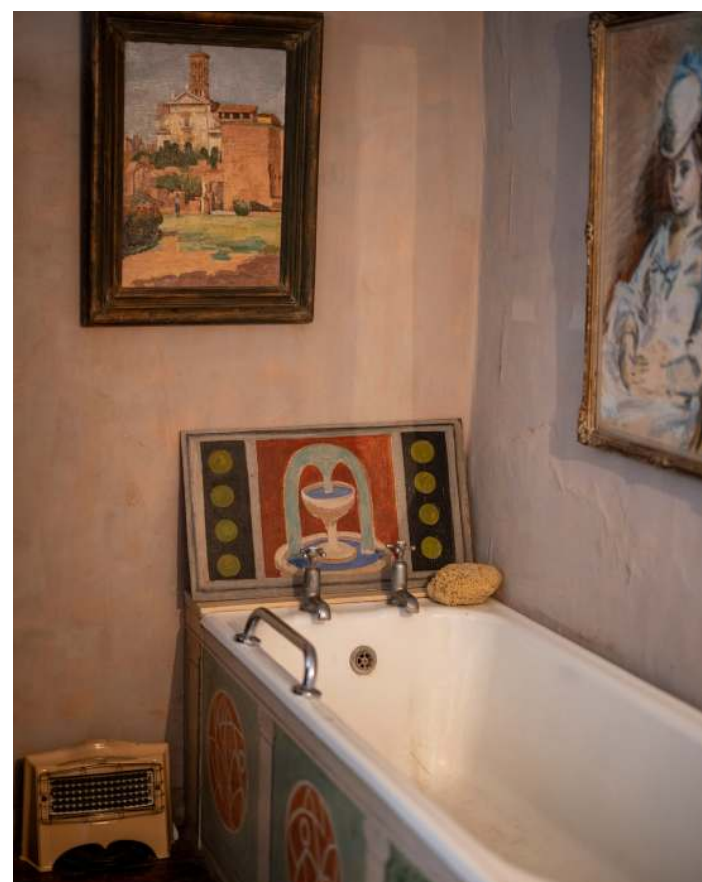
For almost four decades, the Sussex farmhouse was a safe haven for this radical group to congregate, to exchange ideas and work across the fields of literature, politics and visual art.



Bloomsbury members and their outliers - among them Roger Fry, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, John Maynard Keynes and Lytton Strachey - embraced a bohemian way of life that was at odds with the confines of their strict Victorian upbringings. At Charleston they encouraged each other to step outside the conventions of their time, to experiment and innovate. At the heart of their collective endeavours were modernism, feminism and sexual freedom.

As soon as they arrived at Charleston, Bell and Grant began to paint. Not just on canvas, but directly on to the walls, on to wooden bedheads, bookcases and the fireplaces that are the focal point of many a room. Every available surface is embellished with the vibrant swirls, geometric shapes and richly textured pattern that has become known as their distinctive visual style.

Each room is filled with books, paintings and artistic ephemera. Shelves overflow with painterly ceramics, figurines, busts and naive sculptures. Almost every wall and surface is covered with intricate pattern. From Bell's



botanical illustrations on the panels beneath the windows of the study to Grant's Ballets Russes-inspired figures daubed on the back of the door, there's a palpable sense of the spirit and creative energy of its former inhabitants throughout the house.

The couple's identification with Post-Impressionism, and the bold, brightly coloured works of Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, not only helped shape their visual identity, but also helped to determine their opposing position in relation to mainstream culture. Many of the painted surfaces and textiles in the house have naturally faded over the years, but they would have appeared incredibly vibrant at the time of their making, and at odds with the conservative interior trends of the time.

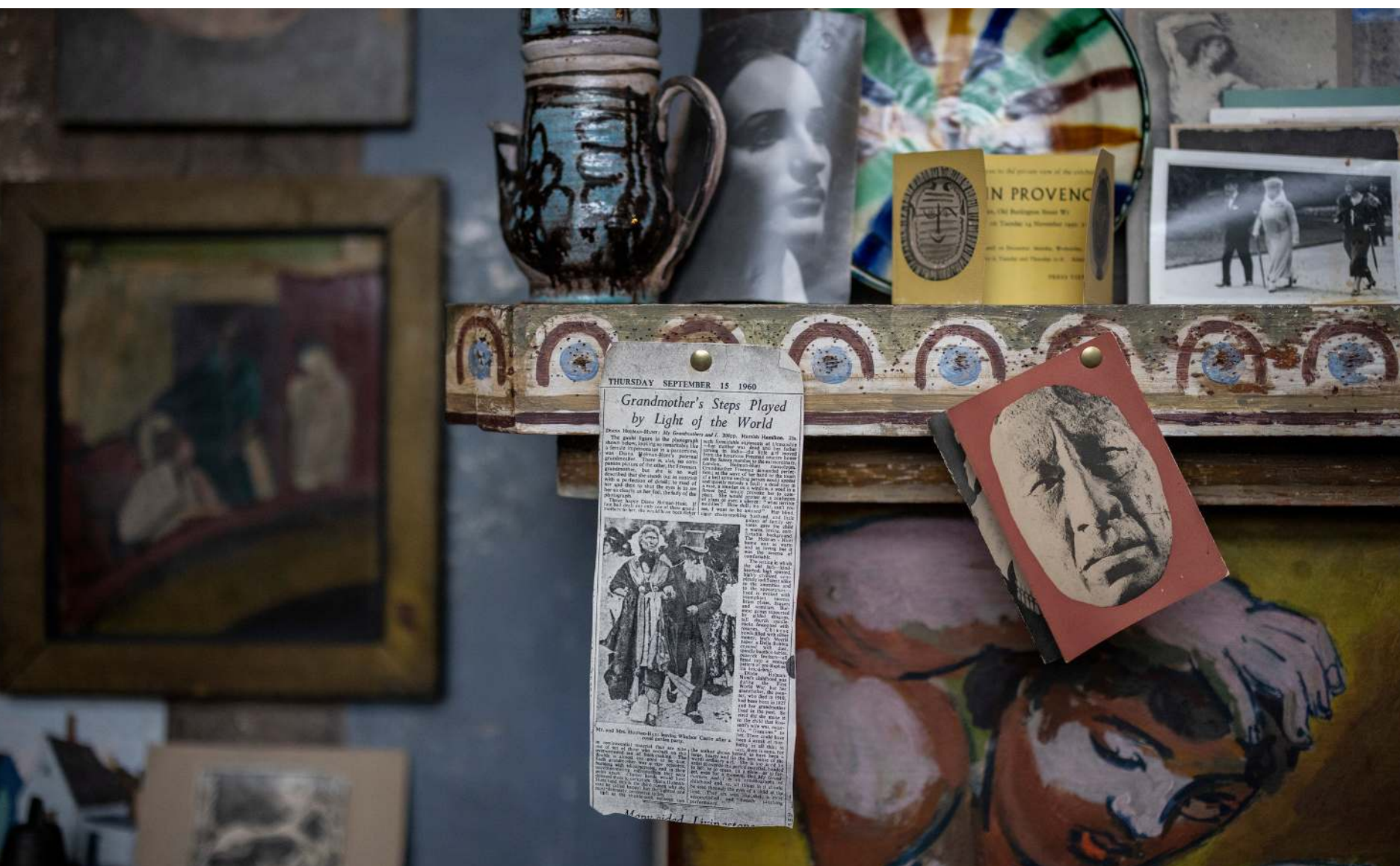
The restoration of the house began in 1980 when the Charleston Trust was formed to maintain the space and preserve its heritage in recognition of the importance of the group to British culture and society. Each room has been carefully restored so as to feel as though one of the previous occupants may have just left to make a cup of tea, such is the meticulous attention to detail pertaining to the time and space.

It's difficult to focus on any particular object for too long as your eye is constantly darting around the room, drawn by another beautifully hued print or texture, but there are elements of colour that tie each space together, creating a harmony that has a pleasing, almost calming effect. The rooms feel warm and lived in, and not really old-fashioned at all.

The low ceilings of the 17th-century farmhouse are in stark contrast to the loftier, light-filled studio space, which was later added by the artists in 1925. While the dining and sitting rooms retain a sense creativity and community, it is the painting studio that feels like the heart of the house - a space which would have been a hub of activity. Here, too, care has been taken to arrange artefacts and ephemera to achieve a sense of time having stood still.

And while it is evident that the house is now a museum, the place is imbued with a magical sense of warmth and life that seems to somehow capture the spirit and optimism of its famous occupants in all their delightfully rebellious glory.

Plan your visit to Charleston House at [www.charleston.org.uk](http://www.charleston.org.uk)



# ROASTED CAULIFLOWER SOUP WITH WALNUT AND SAGE PESTO

## INGREDIENTS

### Soup

One large cauliflower (approx 700-800g)  
150ml double cream  
Two bay leaves  
250ml whole milk  
50g butter  
Four or five shallots  
200ml vegetable stock  
Two tablespoons of olive oil  
Salt and pepper  
For serving, a few sage leaves  
and nigella seeds

### Pesto

100g walnuts  
Large handful of basil (approx half a 25g bag)  
Handful of flat leaf parsley  
Ten large leaves of sage (plus extra for topping)  
Large handful of flaked almonds  
70g parmesan (roughly chopped)  
One clove of garlic (crushed)  
Zest and juice of one lemon  
Six tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

## METHOD

For the pesto, lightly toast the walnuts over a low heat in a dry frying pan for around ten minutes, then whizz all the ingredients together in a food processor. Add more oil if necessary to achieve a spoonable texture. Season to taste.

Preheat the oven to 180 (fan). Break the cauliflower into florets, toss in the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Arrange in a single layer on one of two baking sheets and roast in the oven for between 20 and 30 minutes. It's fine if the florets char slightly (just don't allow it to burn), but this will make your soup a darker, brownish grey colour. You can use the leaves, too - add those halfway through cooking the florets.

Meanwhile, chop the shallots and gently fry for 8-10 minutes in the butter until soft. Do not allow them to colour. Add the bay leaves, milk, stock and cauliflower florets (and leaves if using) and bring to a simmer for five to ten minutes. Once the cauliflower is soft, remove from the heat, take out the bay leaves and whizz with a stick blender to a smooth consistency. Add the cream and season to taste. If your soup is a little thick, add milk and/or cream to taste and season again.

Take a handful of smaller sage leaves and shallow fry in rapeseed oil (or another flavourless oil) for a couple of minutes, or until the oil stops bubbling. Gently pat dry on some kitchen paper before serving. Spoon the soup into bowls and swirl with spoonfuls of pesto. Arrange the crispy sage leaves on top and sprinkle with nigella seeds if desired.





# CREATIVE PEOPLE

ARTIST AND MENTOR ABBY MONROE CREATES EXPERIMENTAL MULTI-MEDIA WORKS THAT TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THE LANDSCAPE THAT SURROUNDS HER SUFFOLK HOME

***Could you tell us a bit about your background and how you came to be doing what you're doing now?***

My business has slowly evolved over the last fifteen years. In 2008 I went back to college to do an MA in Textiles, I had been teaching Art & Design since 2003 and continued to do so throughout my MA and after. The financial crash stunted a lot of the dreams I initially had but fortunately because of my teaching roles I was able to keep up a studio and continue to make work.

***Is this what you always wanted to do?***

Well actually, no, I did Fine Art, Dance and History of Art at A Level and was set on being a dancer. I did ballet from the age of three and had fallen in love with contemporary dance at school. We had the most incredibly inspiring teacher and I spent 50% of my time at school in a leotard at dance club and in productions. I applied to dance college to do a degree, but unfortunately longstanding injuries prevented me from being accepted. I did explore doing costume design as fashion and textiles was also a big passion of mine, but a dance friend was doing a YMCA course to become an aerobics instructor and choreographing routines and teaching classes was the best substitute for a dance career at the time. After I qualified I got a job in a London gym and started teaching classes, which I loved but after a while I knew something was missing.

Around the corner from the gym was Morley Art College and I went along to their open day. To do an Art degree in the UK you need to do a Foundation course

and to apply to that you submit a portfolio of work. I only had my A Level work, so I applied to their pre-foundation Course which ran in the evenings. I can remember the feeling I had trotting off to the college after work, I really had a spring in my step and a flame had been ignited and four wonderful years later I graduated with a BA Hons in Fine Art.

***How did your childhood influence your career choices?***

Looking back, everything about my childhood was creative. My Mum was super creative; making clothes, she was a great cook and baker, and did flower pressing and arranging, sewing, smocking dresses for me and making matching bags and doll's clothes. My Dad was not about much. He was a musician and always on tour, who was then permanently absent from my life from when I was eight, but part of my creative DNA nonetheless. His mother, however, was the most wonderful Grandma. She had a very full, creative life, going to art classes, making pressed flower pictures and gifts and had the most fabulous taste. Dancing from a very young age, there was always ballet shoes to have their ribbons sewn, tutus to mend. The sewing box was always open and there were always crafts on the go especially at Easter and Christmas. Making, mending, and creating things was how I was brought up.

***Could you give us an insight into how you work?***

This is quite difficult to answer as it varies so much, but it usually begins with a spark of inspiration, which can come from almost anywhere. Then usually a period of research, falling down some rabbit holes, looking into the etymology of any words that are cropping up, reading around a subject and taking photos. My most recent work is a series of miniature landscapes inspired by a year walking through and exploring the footpaths of the Suffolk coast.



### **Are there materials that you're particularly drawn to?**

I have always worked in mixed media and love to mix cloth, clay, and paper. These seem to be my benchmarks. I also love working with metal and am working on some new pieces incorporating found rusty objects and flotsam and jetsam from our local beach.

### **How do you stay focused? Do you have a daily routine?**

I do, but it is very loose and also changes depending on the season, but I always have what I call my playtime until 10am. I give myself a few hours in the morning to just play, no agenda, just doing what feels right. Watching the sunrise with my morning coffee is my favourite way to start the day. After that it varies from reading, journaling, yoga, in summer a swim in the sea, other times it's diving straight into making in my studio, but then I pause at 10 o'clock, take stock and get my three most important tasks done for the day. I like to get them done before lunch (if I can), I usually have lunch with my husband who also works from home and then the afternoons vary depending on the season. During autumn and winter I try to get out for a walk to see the sun set and then back home to get cosy and a few more hours in the studio before dinner and switching off for the evening.

### **Could you tell us about the mentoring you do and the art journaling courses you run?**

The mentoring is something I have been doing for a very long time since I started teaching, but doing it online for creatives has been something I've been doing now for a couple of years. I absolutely love to help other creative souls gain the confidence and clarity they need to grow their practice as an artist or their creative business through either a one-off pep talk or a series of talks over a period of time to help them find direction, solve a problem, or as an experienced sounding board for creative ideas and help with actionable solutions.

My art journaling course and membership were born out of my own rediscovery of working in a sketchbook and the beautiful practice of art journaling that had brought me so much joy in difficult times. Using artistic practice to explore themes and ideas, with the main focus on the process of creating and of self-expression rather than a particular end result is the idea. It is an invitation to discover or reawaken the joy of creating just for the sake of creating. A dedicated space for playful explorations and experiments to fuel your creativity and keep your jar topped up.

### **Where do you find inspiration?**

The writer Sarah Ban Breathnach says in her book Simple Abundance 'nothing in your life is too insignificant to be a source of inspiration' and I most definitely find it simple moments. During a walk in nature, whilst watching the sunrise, gazing at the moon on an afternoon walk, spotting a sunlit shadow dancing on a wall, the movement of bleached flora in the breeze.

### **Do you get lonely, or do you have a group of likeminded creatives you hook up with?**

I am very lucky to be married to an artist, so there is always someone to talk to about my work, I am also part of the Folk & Field Membership and Wild Work Collective, which is a place where I truly have found my tribe. It's a community and course for what they call 'wildhearted folk' who love nature and the seasons, with the emphasis on slowing down, simplifying and rewilding. They run a community and course for those who crave deeper connection - to themselves, to likeminded others, and to the natural world. I am also very lucky to have a few amazing creative friends to chew the fat with over a coffee, on a walk along the beach or hours over the phone.







**What's the best piece of advice you've been given?**

'Just try it out and see'. A really inspirational tutor at college would always say this whenever you asked her if she thought something was a good idea or not and she was never wrong. Picasso once said, 'inspiration exists but it has to find you working' and for me this couldn't be truer. Just start, take the first step and then the next one and before you know it you are on a journey to a new destination.

**If you could give just one piece of advice to someone you're mentoring, what would it be?**

Take the time to tune into what your soul is guiding you to, I believe the answers are always inside of us, but we must make the time and space to listen. Make it a priority and schedule it into your diary if necessary.

**Where is your weekend happy place?**

It all depends on the weather and the season but it usually either art journaling, painting, sewing, pottering in my garden, in the shed, in my vintage caravan, baking or walking and scavenging on the local beaches. Fundamentally in my own world, faffing, collecting, curating, daydreaming, forgetting time and place and totally in flow.

**What are you plans for 2022? Any new projects on the horizon?**

I love spending the winter making plans for the coming year and I am really looking forward to some new things which are emerging. With the uncertainty of life still looming, plans that I have had for an art journaling retreat and photo walks might still be on hold until 2023. But I would love to take part in the Suffolk open studios in the summer showing my artwork in my caravan at the bottom of my garden. I am also planning some mini online classes, like the four hour ones I used to run in person. There is a new e-book, and a digital art journaling membership also on the horizon. I like to have a nice mix of things as I thrive on variety.

**Find out more about Abby's work, mentoring programmes and art journaling courses at [www.abbymonroe.co.uk](http://www.abbymonroe.co.uk)**

