



# **A Crisis of Brilliance: Five Young British Artists and the Great War**

*David Boyd Haycock*

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Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Mark Gertler, Richard Nevinson and Dora Carrington were five of the most exciting, influential and innovative British artists of the twentieth century. From diverse backgrounds, they met in the years before the Great War as students at the Slade School of Art, where they formed part of what their teacher Henry Tonks described as the school's last 'crisis of brilliance'. To the Bloomsbury Group critic Roger Fry they were 'les jeunes' -- the 'Young British Artists' of their day. As their talents evolved, they became Futurists, Vorticists and 'Bloomsberries', and befriended the leading writers and intellectuals of the time, from Virginia Woolf and Rupert Brooke to D. H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield. They led the way in fashion with their avant-garde clothes and haircuts; they slept with their models and with prostitutes; their tempestuous love affairs descended into obsession, murder and suicide. And as Europe plunged into the madness of the 'War to end Wars', they responded to its horror with all the passion and genius they could muster.

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