



OPPOSITE  
*Study, 1925–1932* (detail;  
cat 6)

## MURALS

‘Brangwyn is essentially, and of supreme scope and quality, a *decorative* artist. He was born to paint large, to cover vast spaces with stupendous designs and masses of vitalising colour.’

Philip Macer-Wright, ‘About Frank Brangwyn’, supplement to *John O’London’s Weekly*, 6 December 1930

Brangwyn received his first mural commission in 1895 when he was only 28 and completed his last mural in 1947 when he was 80 years old. In those fifty years he had received over 20 mural commissions and his completed works cover over 2,000 sqm (½ acre of canvas).

In general his designs empathised with the architectural setting, they were well balanced, two dimensional and orchestrated by strong horizontal and verticals. Figures were usually outlined in blue and the scale was consistent throughout a mural cycle. Brangwyn painted large patches of single colour as befitted the scale of the works, rather than overburdening the murals with detail.

Although commentators have regarded Brangwyn as a British successor to the great Italian Renaissance muralists, his approach was closer to that of the French, in particular Puvis de Chavannes and members of the Nabis. Industrialised labour was the theme of many of these works; dominant muscular men, often toiling and naked from the waist up (see cat 2). Women appeared less frequently, and when they did, tended to be Rubenesque. The murals were generally free from archaeological historicism, allegory, mythology and stereotypical symbols, Brangwyn preferring to capture attention by the decorative content of his work.

Despite rumours to the contrary, Brangwyn never travelled to the United States of America, Canada or Wales to see his murals in position. In fact he only painted two murals – Bing’s shop *L’Art Nouveau*, Paris and Casa Cuseni, Sicily in situ, the remainder being painted in his large



studio at Temple Lodge, Hammersmith or his studio at The Jointure, Ditchling. When painting the Rockefeller Center murals, lack of sufficient space forced him to borrow one of the Exhibition Galleries at Brighton (see above). As a token of his gratitude Brangwyn donated 174 etchings and 48 lithographs to the town.

Brangwyn with the Rockefeller mural, 'Man the Creator', c 1930–1934 (cat 193h)

#### MAJOR MURAL WORKS (red indicates extant murals)

##### Bing's *L'Art Nouveau*, 22 Rue de Provence, Paris, 1895

(M2449) Two friezes and various stencil decorations for exterior of building, commissioned by Siegfried Bing. Exterior artwork obliterated. Keim's process on canvas, each frieze 5486 cm (180 ft) long<sup>12</sup>

Brangwyn gained this commission when he was only 28 years old, and although his oil paintings were already receiving acclaim in Paris, he

had never attempted mural painting. Other artists collaborating with Bing at the time included Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Vincent van Gogh, Felix Vallotton, Henry van de Velde and Edouard Vuillard.

##### Royal Exchange, City of London, 1900–1906

(M1136) Commissioned by Thomas Lane Devitt.<sup>14</sup> Roberson's spirit fresco, 533.4 × 335.3 cm (17 ft, 6 in × 11 ft)

##### Great Hall of The Worshipful Company of Skinners, Dowgate Hill, London, 1901–1909

(M1139) Commission gained through Devitt. Oil on canvas, 6 panels measuring 289.6 × 320 cm (9 ft, 6 in × 10 ft, 6 in), 4 measuring 289.6 × 152.4 cm (9 ft, 6 in × 5 ft 3 in). *Harmony* in gallery measures 152.5 × 365 cm (5 ft × 12 ft). Four further panels, installed 1937, measure 289.6 × 152.4 cm (9 ft, 6 in × 5 ft 3 in) (see cat 1)

##### Canadian Grand Trunk Railway Offices, Cockspur Street, London (Now in the Ottawa Conference Center, Canada), 1909–1910

(M2341) Tempera on heavy jute canvas, 137.2 × 2194.6 cm (4 ft, 6 in × 72 ft)

##### Committee Luncheon Room of Lloyd's Register of Shipping, Fenchurch Street, London, 1908–1914

(M2619) Commission gained through Devitt. Panels removed, stored, lost. Oil on canvas. 4 panels measured 137.2 × 121.9 cm (4 ft, 6 in × 4 ft), 4 panels 137.2 × 243.8 cm (4 ft, 6 in × 8 ft), 2 panels 137.2 × 91.4 cm (4 ft, 6 in × 3 ft) and lunette 243.8 × 670.6 cm (8 × 22 ft).

##### Court of the Ages, Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco (now in Herbst Theatre, Veteran's Building Auditorium, San Francisco, USA), 1914

(M1323) Oil on absorbent coarse textured jute canvas, 8 panels each measuring 762 × 365.8 cm (25 × 12 ft)

Brangwyn was the only British artist chosen to paint murals for the Exposition. The other choices were all American.

##### Lunette, Cuyahoga County Court House, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, 1911–1915

(M1142) Oil mixed with wax, on canvas, 457.2 × 1524 cm (15 × 50 ft).

The *New York Times* stated that the canvas was the 'largest picture ever painted in London for shipment abroad'.<sup>15</sup>

### Mosaic mural, St Aidan's, Roundhay Road, Leeds, 1908–1916

Commissioned by Robert Hawthorne Kitson, (M1108)<sup>16</sup> Rust's Vitreous Mosaic, 90 sqm (900 sq ft) apse, 27.9 sqm (279 sq ft) sea wall. (see cat 3 and 4)

### Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg, Canada, 1918–1921

(M1403) Flat oil on canvas, 457.2 × 670.6 cm (15 × 22 ft)

### Stations of the Cross for Leper Mission, South Africa (now belonging to Archdiocese of Pretoria), 1920–1922

(S3546) Tempera on canvas, 14 panels each measuring 81 × 104 cm (31<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 41 in).

### Chapel, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, Sussex, 1912–1923

(M1109) Egg tempera on canvas, 14 panels measuring 243.8 × 426.7 cm (8 × 14 ft), two panels 243.8 × 213.4 cm (8 × 7 ft)

### Dome decoration, Selfridges', Oxford Street, London, 1921–1923

(M2157) Commissioned by Harry Gordon Selfridge, unexecuted. The dome was 21 metres (70 ft) in diameter and the interior was to have been covered with mosaic. (see cat 5)

### Stations of the Cross, Arras Cathedral, 1920–1924

(S1530) Unfinished. Oil on canvas, 14 panels each measuring 104 × 142 cm (41 × 55<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in). (See cat 34)

### State Capitol, Jefferson City, USA, 1915–1925

(M1135) Flat oil on canvas, eye of dome 1097.3 cm (36 ft) in diameter; 4 pendentives each 731.5 cm high (24 ft), 1463 cm (48 ft) wide at top and 457 cm (15 ft) wide at base; eight lower dome panels approximately 487.7 × 853.4 cm (16 × 28 ft)

### British Empire Panels, 1925–1932

Commissioned by Lord Iveagh (intended for Royal Gallery, Westminster but now housed in Brangwyn Hall, Guildhall, Swansea), (M1145). Oil and tempera on canvas, 10 panels measuring 365 × 365 cm (12 × 12 ft), 6 panels measuring 610 × 396 cm (20 × 13 ft). (See cat 6–13)

### GE (previously RCA) Building, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, USA, 1930–1934

(M1110) Commissioned by John D Rockefeller Jr. Tempera on coarse canvas, 4 panels, each 518.2 × 762 cm (17 ft × 25 ft).<sup>17</sup>

Matisse and Picasso turned down the offer to paint murals for the Center, and the artists finally chosen were Brangwyn, the Mexican artist, Diego Rivera, and the Spaniard, José Maria Sert (see p 40–43).



Brangwyn and his assistants putting the finishing touches to the Skinners' hall murals, c 1909 (cat 193b)

### Lunette, Odham's Press, Long Acre, London, 1935–1936

(M1878) Commissioned by Lord Southwood, now in private collection. Oil and tempera, 396.2 × 548.6 cm (13 × 18 ft)

### Last Supper, Holy Name of Mary Church, Middlesbrough, 1939–1945

(M1179) Oil on canvas, 94 × 387.4 cm (3 ft × 12 ft, 6 in)

### Last Supper, St Joseph's, Stokesley, 1946–1947

(M1825) Oil on canvas, 137.2 × 401.3 cm (4 ft, 6 in × 13 ft). The church and contents were destroyed in fire, 1974



CAT. 1

*Great Hall of the Worshipful Company of Skinners:**Study of Workman Eating, 1901–1910*

(M1139) Signed with monogram b.l.: 'FB'. Also inscribed (in another hand) b.r.:

'WdeB Coll' and verso: '89 William de Belleruche Collection 31'

Coloured crayon and ink on brown paper, 21 × 20.5 cm (8¼ × 8⅞ in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche (No 84); Christie's, 18 July 1961, part Lot 35; Gordon Anderson

Brangwyn was commissioned in August 1901 to paint 11 mural panels for the Great Hall of The Skinners Company in London. He was expected to complete two of the larger panels within a year and the complete commission within five years. Unfortunately Brangwyn had, as usual, undertaken too much work, and the murals were not completed until 1909. The panel, *Departure of Sir James Lancaster for the East Indies, AD 1594* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1904, the year Brangwyn was elected an Associate. The panel *Harmony* in the gallery replaced *Fruits of Industry* which is now in the Mildura Arts Centre, Victoria, Australia.

This is probably a sketch for panel 1, *Skin-Merchants or Skinners selecting Furs and Pelts at the City Mart in the days before the Guild of Corpus Christi received their Charter*.

CAT. 2 (illustrated overleaf)

*Industrial Frieze, c 1910*

(M2853) Inscribed (not in Brangwyn's hand) on stretcher: 'MATSUKATA'

Mixed media on paper laid on canvas, 50.6 × 148.4 cm (19⅞ × 58⅞ in)

Provenance: Kojiro Matsukata; unknown

Ill: W K West, 'Some Examples of Recent Work by Mr Frank Brangwyn ARA', *The Studio*, February 1911, p 22

*The Studio* magazine in which this work was reproduced (February 1911) captioned the design 'sketch in oils for a frieze'. It is unclear whether it was a commissioned work, rather than speculative, or indeed whether it was ever realised. Although the stretcher is inscribed 'MATSUKATA', it seems unlikely that he commissioned the design as the earliest recorded contact between Matsukata and Brangwyn was 1916.<sup>18</sup>







ST AIDAN'S CHURCH, ROUNDHAY ROAD, LEEDS,  
1908–1916 (M1108)

The red brick church of St Aidan was designed by R J Johnson, executed by his partner A Crawford-Hicks, and completed in 1894. It is Basilican in style and both east and west ends are apsidal. Brangwyn designed the sea wall decoration, the dado of the apse and the mural above which illustrates, from left to right, the landing of St Aidan in Northumbria, St Aidan feeding the poor, St Aidan preaching, and the death of St Aidan.

CAT. 3

*Beggars*

Signed with monogram b.l.: 'FB'. Also inscribed (in another hand) b.r.: 'WdeB Coll'

Sanguine drawing on paper, 45 × 63.5 cm (17¾ × 25 in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche; Gordon Anderson; Hilary Gerrish

CAT. 4

*Two Monks*

Signed with monogram b.r.: 'FB' and inscribed b.r.: 'St Aidans, Leeds'. Also inscribed

(in another hand) b.r.: 'WdeB Coll' and verso: '115 William de Belleruche Collection'

Red chalk on cream paper, squared, 48.5 × 34.5 cm (19½ × 13½ in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche (No 122); Gordon Anderson; Hilary Gerrish





SELFRIDGES' DOME DECORATION, 1921–1923 (M2157)

Harry Gordon Selfridge, nicknamed 'Mile a Minute Harry', brought American ideas on commerce and advertising to the British retail business. His vast Emporium in Oxford Street was, when built, the largest in England and was enlarged over the following twenty years. Brangwyn was approached to design a decoration for the interior of the huge dome, which he suggested should be in mosaic. Unfortunately the plan never came to fruition because the London County Council feared that the excessive weight might damage the underground railway (see p48).<sup>19</sup>

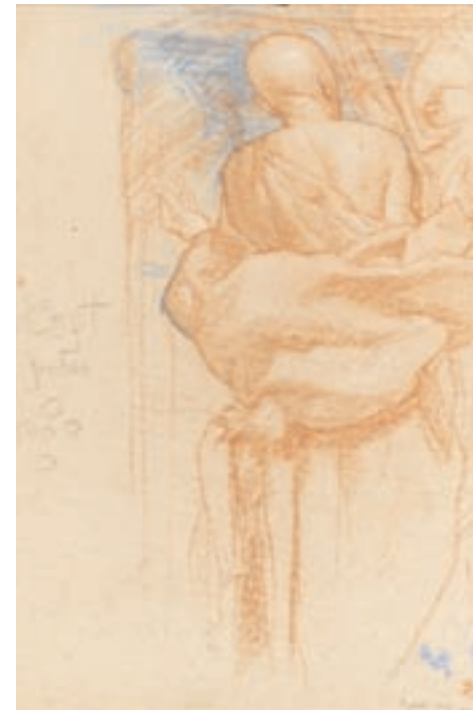
CAT. 5

*Study of Old Franklin*<sup>20</sup>

Signed with monogram b.l.: 'FB' and inscribed c.l.: 'Copt/puller' and 'Franklin/Reunion House'. Also inscribed (in another hand) b.r.: 'WdeB Coll 55' and verso: '123 William de Belleruche Collection'

Sanguine and blue crayon heightened with white on buff paper, 54.7 × 36.6 cm (21½ × 14¾ in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche (No 123); Gordon Anderson; Hilary Gerrish



BRITISH EMPIRE PANELS, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA,  
1925–1932 (M1145)

The British Empire panels were commissioned by the Earl of Iveagh to decorate the Royal Gallery in the House of Lords, Westminster. Following the death of Iveagh, the Fine Art Commission insisted on some panels being placed temporarily in the Gallery. They rejected the work as did the House of Lords. Brangwyn completed the commission which was eventually exhibited at the Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, 1933. Offers for the panels were received from the USA and Japan, and British cities including Birmingham, Cardiff and London attempted to gain the murals.<sup>21</sup> However, a new Guildhall was being designed for Swansea and the city persuaded Iveagh's son and Brangwyn that the panels could be successfully accommodated in the main hall, now known as the Brangwyn Hall.

There are over 100 studies for the British Empire panels in public galleries in the UK and Australia, the largest collection (some 61 works) being in Swansea, at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery and the Guildhall. An equal number probably exists in private collections throughout the world. There are also at least 22 photographs of models which were used as studies.

The British Empire panels represent a sublime mixture of Flemish verdure tapestries and *natura naturans*, Indonesian paintings, and William Morris flora and fauna. Humans have virtually disappeared, hidden behind hallucinatory visions of foliage and wildlife infested forest.

Critical reaction to the completed panels has varied from the glowing: 'The most splendid unit of decorative painting executed in Europe since Tintoretto ceased his work in the Doge's Palace at Venice'<sup>22</sup> to the airily dismissive: 'All tits and bananas'.<sup>23</sup>

CAT. 6 (detail on p 18)

*Study*

Oil on canvas, 421.6 × 68.6 cm (166 × 27 in)

Provenance: Crosby Cook, and by descent

Some of Brangwyn's finest studies are those he made for the British Empire panels. He told his friend RH Kitson that he was 'working from flowers, trees, animals, and black and colored men women and children. It is very interesting more especially the animals and a grand chance for me to take up animals and landscape and do it finely. It never has really been done only a bit here and there.'<sup>24</sup>



CAT. 7

*Profile of Heads of Two Negro Boys*

Signed with monogram b.r.: 'FB'

Red chalk on cream wove paper, squared, 25 × 26 cm (9 7/8 × 10 1/4 in)

Provenance: William de Belleroche (No 165); Gordon Anderson

CAT. 8

*Young Negro Boy*

Signed with monogram b.r.: 'FB'

Brown, red and white chalk on brown paper, squared, 38.2 × 25.6 cm (15 × 10 1/8 in)

Provenance: William de Belleroche (No 161); Gordon Anderson



CAT. 9

*Five Profiles of Negro Boy*

Signed with monogram b.r.: 'FB'

Brown chalk on cream wove paper, squared, 41.5 × 28.5 cm (16 1/4 × 11 1/4 in)

Provenance: William de Belleroche (No 158); Gordon Anderson



## BRITISH EMPIRE PANELS (continued)

CAT. 10 (also illustrated on p4)

### *Head of a Chimpanzee*

Signed with monogram in pencil b.r.: 'FB'

Brown ink and white chalk on pink paper, squared, 19.8 × 15.8 cm (7¾ × 6¼ in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche (No 160); Gordon Anderson

Exh: *Exhibition of Works by Frank Brangwyn RA*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1952 (No 232)

CAT. 11

### *Blue Parrots*

Signed with monogram b.r.: 'FB' and inscribed centre: 'red line'. Also inscribed (in another hand) b.l.: 'WdeBColl' and verso: '68 William de Belleruche Collection' and '90'

Blue and black crayon, wash on paper, 50.6 × 35 cm (19¾ × 13¾ in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche; Gordon Anderson; Hilary Gerrish



CAT. 12

### *Studies of a Frog*

Signed with monogram and dated b.r.: 'FB' and 'Ditchling 1923'.

Also inscribed (in another hand) b.l.: 'WdeB Coll'

Pencil on paper, 35 × 24 cm (13¾ × 9⅝ in)

Provenance: William de Belleruche (No 18); Gordon Anderson

The partly decomposed frog also made an appearance in a woodcut for Emile Verhaeren's, *Les Campagnes Hallucines*.<sup>25</sup>

CAT. 13

### *Sunflowers (recto), Sketch of Leaves (verso)*

Inscribed with monogram and place b.l.: 'Warborrow/FB'. Other inscriptions: 'green leaf with/grey warm edge', 'vins[sic] & leaves light', 'warm green and purple/lemon around seed/ golden seed with white/[?] green oxide with/warm grey at ends which/dry/green stalk getting to very light/green at bottom'

Pencil on brown paper, 62.4 × 42.8 cm (24⅝ × 16⅞ in)

Provenance: Hilary Gerrish

The notations on this drawing are typical of those with which Brangwyn annotated his nature sketches.



GENERAL ELECTRIC (PREVIOUSLY RCA) BUILDING,  
30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK, 1930–1934 (M1110)

Frank Brangwyn, the Spanish artist José Maria Sert and the Mexican, Diego Rivera were the three artists chosen to paint murals to decorate the main entrance of the 77 storey RCA Building. The commission sparked controversy from the outset, critics complaining that American artists should have been chosen for the prestigious work. In May 1933 Rivera was prevented from finishing his mural when it was discovered that he had included a portrait of Lenin, and sympathisers of the artist clashed with police outside the building. The authorities also objected to the bright colours of the panel (Sert and Brangwyn had both agreed to paint monochrome works) and the mural was taken down and replaced by a new mural by Sert.

Brangwyn was asked to produce four large murals which are placed on the south side of the elevator corridor, RCA building. The paintings were carried out in three tones to harmonize with the black terrazzo floor, the walls which were of Champlain black marble to a height of 228.6 cm (7 ft 6 in), and the ivory ceiling. Not more than 60–75% of the canvas was to be painted and lettering was to be included. Brangwyn was given the theme *Man's new relationship to society and his fellow men, his family relationships, his relationships as a worker, his relationships as part of a government and his ethical and religious relationships.*<sup>26</sup>

In September 1933, Brangwyn himself faced controversy. Officials from the Rockefeller Center objected to the figure of Christ being included in the fourth panel, representing the Sermon on the Mount. Raymond M Hood, one of the architects of the Center, explained that, 'some people here felt that it would not be fitting to put the figure of Christ in a business building. They thought that might be too strong a representation of an individual religion'.<sup>27</sup> It was suggested that Brangwyn represented Jesus by a light shining from Heaven. However the artist merely reversed his figure, so that Christ facing the populace became the back of a nameless cloaked man.

The following two life-sized studies are similar to the finished compositions both in terms of scale and colour.

OPPOSITE  
*Study for 'Man the Master',*  
1930–1934 (detail; cat 15)





CAT. 14 (detail opposite)

*Study for Man the Creator*

Oil on canvas, 274.3 × 182.9 cm (108 × 72 in)

Provenance: E Kenneth Center;<sup>28</sup> William de Belleruche (No 84); Gordon Anderson

CAT. 15 (detail on p41)

*Study for Man the Master*

Oil on canvas, 274.3 × 182.9 cm (108 × 72 in)

Provenance: E Kenneth Center; William de Belleruche (No 83); Gordon Anderson

*William de Belleruche with  
Studies for 'Man the Creator'  
and 'Man the Master',  
c 1960 (cat 1921)*





CAT. 16  
*Sketch for panel in the house of Grant Bryn & Mays,  
Pennsylvania, USA, c 1935*

(M2087) Signed with monogram: 'FB' and inscribed with title verso  
Oil on board, 41 × 44.5 cm (16 1/8 × 19 1/2 in)  
Provenance: William Stewart, and by descent; private collection  
Lit & Ill: *Liss Fine Art*, 2005 (cat 29)

This is a study for a proposed mural which has not, to date, been identified. Brangwyn may have gained the commission through one of his American assistants. Only one other study is known to exist, a conté drawing in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, squared for enlargement; a photographic study of the central mother and child gives a clue to the date.<sup>29</sup>

