

RICHARD GREEN

JESSICA HAYLLAR

London 1858 - 1940 Worplesdon, Surrey

Ref: CC 147

A pink azalea



Signed and dated lower right: *Jessica Hayllar / 1904*

Oil on board: 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ in / 26.4 x 18.7 cm

Frame size: 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 40 x 31.8 cm



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Provenance:

Private collection, Dorset, then by descent

This painting has been requested by the MAPFRE Foundation, Madrid, for their forthcoming exhibition, *Pathways to Pre-Raphaelitism*, September 2026-January 2027

Jessica Hayllar excelled in the representation of flowers, particularly azaleas, their delicate pink and white petals rendered with extraordinary, almost photographic detail. In the present work, the glorious flowering shrub is as beautifully portrayed as the exquisite interior in which it stands. The fresh pink azalea rises from a blue and gold jardiniere or planter with foliate roundels, which also appears in her paintings, *A sunny corner*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1910 and *From the greenhouse*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1911, and was perhaps purchased, like the table on which it stands, for her new home in Bournemouth. The opulent hexagonal side table is most likely by Liberty & Co., circa 1900, its complex pattern of marquetry inlaid with mother of pearl, ebony, rosewood, boxwood and satinwood.

Jessica moved with her parents, James and Ellen, in 1899 to Red Holme, Cambridge Road in Bournemouth, following which she had a carriage accident which left her in a wheelchair. She continued to paint however and remained an incredibly skilful and successful artist. In fact Jessica was the only member of the celebrated family of artists to continue to paint and exhibit into the twentieth century.¹ Though retired from painting, James was involved with and supported the Bournemouth Art Society, perhaps serving as Chairman until 1903² and Jessica followed his example, exhibiting several works each year at their annual exhibitions, as well as in Rochdale City Art Gallery, while still sending works to the Royal Academy in London. It is possible that Jessica exhibited the present work at the Spring exhibition of the Bournemouth Art Society in 1904, as *An azalea*.³

‘Minute observation combined with technical excellence is a feature of all their paintings,’ wrote art historian, Christopher Wood, for whom pictures by the Hayllar family were among the best documentary records of Victorian family life. Jessica was the eldest of four daughters to the artist James Hayllar RBA (1829-1920), from whom she learnt to paint along with her sisters Edith, Mary and Kate, who were also talented artists. ‘As each one reached school-leaving age she was put through a thorough course of drawing, perspective and painting, which lasted from ten till

¹ *The Irish Times*, 30th May 1902, p.5 ‘Among the smaller canvases sold are...“*A Breath of Fresh Air*” by Miss Jessica Hayllar (£31, 10s). See also *Bournemouth Daily Echo*, ‘Bournemouth Art Society, Spring Exhibition,’ 8th April 1910, ‘Miss Jessica Hayllar has some charming flower studies, the red discs on which indicate they have been deemed worthy to be added to some purchaser’s collection.’

² *The Bournemouth Graphic*, ‘Bournemouth Art Society Annual Exhibition’. 22nd March 1906, p.181: ‘Under the fostering care of Mr James Hayllar – a veteran enthusiast and artist of ripe experience and rare merit – and an energetic Committee, it has grown enormously, and this year’s exhibition has over 500 specimens of Art.’ See also *The Bournemouth Graphic*, 14th May 1903, p.310: ‘Now that Mr Hayllar, the indefatigable chairman of the society, has laid aside his brush, it is gratifying to know that his mantle has fallen upon the shoulders of his daughter, Miss Jessica Hayllar, whose work bears witness to an artistic temperament of exquisite refinement.’

³ *The Guardian*, 7th May 1904, p.6: ‘For artistic execution and fidelity to Nature...we must commend the small framed pictures of Miss Jessica Hayllar, “Lillies of the field” and “An Azalea”.’

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four every day. In the evenings there would be 'modelling in clay, etching or mezzotint engraving on copper' according to the *Ladies' Pictorial Magazine*, which published an article about Jessica, Edith and Kate in 1889.

Jessica began to exhibit in 1879, at the Royal Academy, London from 1880-1915, as well as other venues including the Royal Society of British Artists, the Royal Institute of Painters in Oils, the Royal Society of Arts, Birmingham, the Walker Gallery, Liverpool and the Manchester Art Gallery.

Select Bibliography

Christopher Wood, 'The Artistic Family Hayllar', *The Connoisseur*, Part 1, April 197pp.266-2734, Part 2, May 1974, pp. 2-9

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Anthony Wilder, *Victorian Artists of Wallingford. A Tale of Two Dynasties: The Hayllar & Leslie Families*, Pie Power Press, 2006