The Moor's Bridge, Ronda, 1935
Oil on Canvas
50.4 x 66 cms
(19.81 x 25.94 in)

Signed and dated 'Bomberg 35′ lower right
Also signed and inscribed verso on artist's label 'Royal Academy Summer Exhibition No. 3/The Moors Bridge/Ronda/David Bomberg/41 Queens Gate Mews/Gloucester Road/Kensington/SW7.'

Provenance: Purchased by Mr Greenwoods at the 1945 exhibition.
Mr and Mrs Herbert L. Lucas, by 1988.
Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert, London
Private Collection, UK
Osborne Samuel, London
At the end of 1934, David Bomberg and his future wife, the artist Lilian Holt, settled in Ronda. Lilian hoped that the town’s dramatic topography might inspire Bomberg’s work, in the same way as Toledo and Cuenca had earlier done. Her instinct proved well-founded. Bomberg not only considered Ronda the most interesting town in southern Spain, but was immediately struck by its surrounding amphitheatre of mountains and ‘the gorge – a stupendous rent 250-300 ft wide & 400 ft deep’.1

The ravine initiated a series of charcoal drawings emphasising the violence of the rock’s fracturing. A mirroring of formations on either side suggested seismic rupture, while the river Guadalevin, coursing the gorge, might be imagined as constantly eroding its nether reach. Spanning the ravine was the ‘Moor’s Bridge’: a monumental structure, built over a period of forty years during the eighteenth century, pierced with eye-like arches. Lilian recalled the Ronda paintings as swiftly executed, often no more than a few hours’ intensive work.2 Several capture the Moor’s Bridge, sometimes facing its gimlet visage, other times focusing on the rock-hewn citadel. The Moor’s Bridge, Ronda 1935 places the bridge to the left of the composition, backlit by sun, the town clinging to the plateau’s rim with scarcely a margin of sky. The subject of the painting thus becomes – through Bomberg’s eyes – the overwhelming mass of riven, fissured rock.