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Humphrey Jennings: Works of art from one of England's Surrealist Sensations



Humphrey Jennings (1907 – 1950)
Yacht, 1949-1950
Estimate: £1,000-1,500

20th- Century British Art

Wednesday 12th July, 10.30am

Christie's South Kensington

ON VIEW: From Saturday 8th July, 10am

South Kensington - In celebration of the 70th anniversary of the first *International Surrealist Exhibition*, the **20th Century British Art** sale on 12th July 2006 at Christie's South Kensington will feature work by one of the most remarkable contributors to English Surrealism; Humphrey Jennings (1907-1950). With approximately 70 works of art on offer, this is a rare opportunity to pick up a work by one of the principal founders of its movement in London. Estimates range from £200 to £6,000.

The International Surrealist Exhibition

In 1936, Jennings, together with *Herbert Read*, *Roland Penrose* and *André Breton* organised the first International Surrealist Exhibition in London. The show, which opened on 12th June 1936, boasted *Salvador Dali* lecturing from within a deep-sea diving suit and the poet *Dylan Thomas* brewing cups full of boiled string. It also featured *Sheila Legge*, who wandered around Trafalgar Square dressed as a Phantom with her head transformed into a giant rose, clutching a seemingly dismembered leg and a pork chop. Altogether, approximately 23,000 visitors attended the exhibition which featured 360 collages, paintings and sculptures, 30 African and Oceanian objects, two walking sticks and several objets trouvés. 69 artists, representing 14 nationalities, were on show, 27 of them British.

The Works of Art

Much of Jennings' work in the sale features pre and post-industrial landscapes. Jennings was disillusioned by the "false peace" at the end of the war so he focused on the simplicities of pre-Industrial Britain, the rural and the pastoral. One of the highlights in the sale is a group

of early collages, one of which, *Life & Death*, 1934 (estimate £4,000-6,000) was first shown at the exhibition. As well as the collages, the sale offers a selection of 1930s drawings and paintings (lots 144-162).

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Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

Notes to Editors:

Humphrey Jennings

Born in Walberswick, Suffolk on 19 August 1907, Humphrey Jennings studied English at Cambridge University, graduating in 1929 with the highest possible honours, a Starred First. He started his career as a member the GPO film unit in 1934, and was soon making his own films. Jennings loved to observe ordinary life and ordinary people and pioneered new filmmaking techniques to deliver the biggest emotional impact possible on his audience. Jennings helped to co-found a remarkable movement named **Mass Observation**. This involved rich middle-class intellectuals venturing into poorer working-class cities and observing and documenting peoples' social behaviour; their drinking habits, sexual antics, political and social opinions and lifestyles. The research was so detailed that they even looked at how many people wore bowler hats in pubs, how often spittoons were used, how people behaved at war memorials, and who told what kind of dirty joke.

While looking at possible locations for a film in Greece in September 1950, Jennings tragically fell from a rock on the Island of Poros. He is buried in Athens.

English Heritage

On Tuesday 9th May 2006, Humphrey Jennings was honoured for his services to the arts with an English Heritage blue plaque at his former address; 8 Regent's Park Terrace, London.

Public Auction:	Wednesday 12 July, 10.30am
Public Enquiries:	85 Old Brompton Road, SW7 3LD Tel: 020 7930 6074 / www.christies.com
Public Viewing Times:	Monday: 9am – 7.30pm Tuesday – Friday: 9am – 5pm Weekends: 10am – 4pm