

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Graham SUTHERLAND (London 1903 - London 1980)

Green Tree Form

Gouache on paper, over an extensive underdrawing in pencil.

Signed and dated Sutherland 62 at the lower right.

241 x 164 mm. (9 1/2 x 6 1/2 in.)

Drawn in 1962, the present sheet is a fine example of Graham Sutherland's studies after nature, which often take on a visionary quality that links them to the work of such earlier English artists as Samuel Palmer. As one scholar has noted, 'Sutherland's method of working is a lengthy, painstaking and conscientious process. In his nature painting, he begins by making sketches from objects which catch his eye – objects with curious, sometimes rather alarming shapes. From these accurate drawings he proceeds to variations, to create a new pictorial reality which becomes the visual equivalent of his own feelings and emotions. After a number of intermediary sketches in watercolour and gouache, he finally decides on the definitive version to be translated into oil...It is above all in his free translation of nature-forms that Sutherland's work is imbued with a disturbing visionary quality, similar to that found in...the mysterious forest landscapes and tortured scared figures in northern art of the sixteenth century. It is, indeed, this strong northern, emotional quality, fraught with mystery, which makes people see Sutherland's work as a continuation of the English romantic tradition.'

Exhibitions

Venice, Galleria Il Capricorno, March 1994, no.56 [catalogue untraced].

Artist description:

In 1921, after a brief and unsuccessful apprenticeship as a railway engineer, Graham Sutherland enrolled at the Goldsmith's College of Art in London. He made a particular specialty of printmaking, publishing his first etching in 1923, the same year that he first exhibited at the Royal Academy. In 1925 he had his first solo exhibition at the XXI Gallery in London, which published many of the prints produced by the Goldsmith's artists. Sutherland began his career as a successful engraver, teaching printmaking at the Chelsea School of Art between 1928 and 1932. But the collapse of the market for prints after the economic crisis of 1929 led him to expand his activities to include poster and fabric designs, as well as painting. Living in Kent and much inspired by the English landscape, he also spent much time in Sussex and Dorset, and made the first of many visits to Wales in 1934. From 1935 onwards painting became Sutherland's main activity, while the experience of seeing Picasso's *Guernica* when it was exhibited in London in 1937 had a profound effect on him and led him to look more closely at artistic trends in Europe. The following year an exhibition of his landscape paintings was held at the Rosenberg & Helft Gallery in London, with a catalogue introduction written by Sir Kenneth Clark, who was among the first significant patrons and scholars to recognize Sutherland's talent and champion his work.

When the Second World War began, Sutherland was thirty-six years old and considered too old for active duty. In 1940 he had another exhibition of his paintings at the Leicester Galleries in London, and soon afterwards his friend and mentor Kenneth Clark, who had been appointed head of the War Artists Advisory Committee, engaged Sutherland as an official War Artist, a role he fulfilled from 1941 to 1945. He first depicted scenes of bomb damage in London, then turned his attention to studies of industrial production on the home front; tin mining in Cornwall, blast furnaces in South Wales, open cast coal mining and limestone quarrying. Most of his works from this period were acquired by the War Artist's Advisory Commission and later presented to museums around the country. During this period Sutherland also produced book illustrations, set designs, tapestries and a large Crucifixion for the church of St. Matthew in Northampton, completed in 1946. After the war the artist divided his time between Kent and the South of France, where he eventually bought a house at Menton. He produced a number of portraits, and also painted a large canvas entitled *The Origins of the Land* for the Festival of Britain in 1951, while at the Venice Biennale of 1952 the British Pavilion was devoted to Sutherland's work, with the selection later shown in Paris, Amsterdam, Zurich and London. Another major public commission was for a great tapestry of *Christ in Glory* for the new Coventry Cathedral, commissioned in 1952 but not completed until ten years later. Despite several other commissions for religious works, however, Sutherland remained, by and large, a painter of nature.