



EVELYN WILLIAMS 1929-2012
THE LAST PAINTINGS

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25 February - 25 March 2015

ALL WORKS ARE FOR SALE

Prices on application

MARTIN TINNEY GALLERY

WWW.ARTWALES.COM

Evelyn Williams

It is a tribute to the greatness of these paintings that they evoke so many masters of the past: Giotto, Giovanni Bellini, Masaccio, Blake, Fuseli, Stanley Spencer. This list might suggest a melding of the Italian Renaissance with later visionary individuals, and that is probably not too far from the truth of what Evelyn Williams was about. But her paintings create these echoes in the mind not because they are derivative (which they are not) but because what all these artists share is a grave, compelling intensity.

Evelyn Williams was London Welsh, born in 1929 to an opera singer and a writer. She was sent away at the age of not quite 3 to the radical school Summerhill, on the advice of Bertrand Russell. With the school she was evacuated to Llan Ffestiniog in Snowdonia for a formative four years looking up at the dark walls of Moelwyn. After studying painting and drawing at St Martin's School of Art and the Royal College she began producing extraordinary figurative sculptures. It was to save her back from the weight of her materials that from the 1970s she translated these forms to paint.

The paintings in this exhibition are among the last that Evelyn Williams made, working until shortly before her death in November 2012. They show that, however her physical strength may have changed as she entered her eighties, she preserved completely her powers of imagination, painterly form and even scale. Among these last works are surely some of the finest she ever made.

They could be described as figurative, but the figures inhabit other-worlds that are almost abstract; they could be described as narrative, except that the circumstances and stories are left to our own imaginations. Her people seem locked in a dream-quest that even they may not yet understand. For some viewers, the scenes may have religious connotations, set in a Gethsemane or a Gilead perhaps. For all of us, she divines something of what raises human consciousness to the metaphysical. The couples who cling together can be taken to our hearts because they are neither idealised nor individual but seem embodiments of ordinariness and familiarity, embracing in the mystery of belonging.

Pattern is one of the elements that mesmerises in these paintings, striking strongly amid muted colour, poetically conjoining rhythm and form to the expressive subject. There is pattern in the zig-zag of figures winding between low hills under the light of the moon; in the shapes that thread through darkness like buried roots in Lovers Meeting; in a beaded curtain that fills the square of view behind a turning girl; in the restless sea beneath The Raft, folding and twisting like skeins of wool. Waves of pattern surge like a meditative chant.

In an age when we are growing more aware of the power of mindfulness, these paintings are deeply mindful, open to sensation, calming. They seem to come from a consciousness that passed through extremis and found peace, and they achieve what the critic Peter Fuller called 'redemption through form'. Evelyn Williams once said herself of painting, 'here all goes still and I have a sense of relief'. She found the beauty that is intertwined with grief.

Dr Peter Wakelin January 2015

Peter Wakelin is a writer and historian and until recently was Director of Collections and Research at Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales

LOVERS MEETING

oil on canvas 2011 61 x 61cm



A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTER I

oil on canvas 2011 30 x 25cm



A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTER III

oil on canvas 2011 30 x 25cm



A MOTHER AND HER DAUGHTER IV

oil on canvas 2011 30 x 25cm



BY MOONLIGHT

oil on canvas 2011 150 x 120cm



IN THE SHADOW

oil on canvas 2011 61 x 61cm



THE RAFT

oil on canvas 2011 40 x 60cm



IN THE CORNER

oil on canvas 2012 30 x 25cm



FIVE SISTERS

oil on canvas 2011 122 x 122cm



GROUP OF FRIENDS

oil on canvas 2012 91 x 91cm



THE HEAD I

oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122cm



THE HEAD II

oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122cm



THE DRESS I

oil on canvas 2012 30 x 25cm



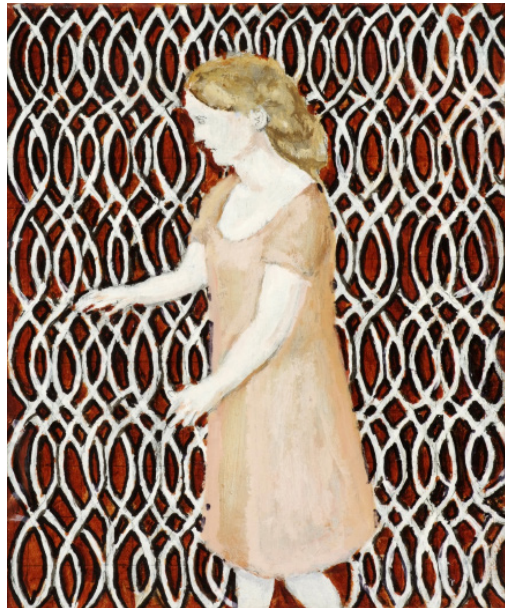
THE DRESS II

oil on canvas 2012 30 x 25cm



THE DRESS III

oil on canvas 2012 30 x 25cm



GIRL WITH FLOWERS
oil on canvas 2012 48 x 36cm



WHITE TREES

oil on canvas 2012 48 x 36cm



HELOISE AND ABELARD
oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122cm



THE FAMILY

oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122cm



THE RED TREE

oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122 cm



SLEEPING GIRL

mixed media 2012 42 x 66cm



PEOPLE MEETING FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON

oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122cm



HEADS LOOKING

oil on canvas 2012 152 x 120cm



THREE ANGELS

oil on canvas 2012 122 x 122cm



TWO HEADS (UNFINISHED)
oil on canvas 2012 41 x 50cm



TWO HEADS II (UNFINISHED)

oil on canvas 2012 41 x 50cm



DRAWING (UNFINISHED)

pencil 2012 50 x 44cm



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Selected Exhibitions

- 2015 'The Last Paintings', Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff
- 2011 'New Paintings', Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff
- 2010 'New Paintings', Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff
- 2008 'Paintings and Drawings', Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff
- 2008 'Drawings', Abbott and Holder, London
- 2008 'On Reflection', Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea
- 2006 'Paintings and Drawings', Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff
- 2003 Agnew's, London
- 1999 England & Co., London
- 1997 'Encounters', Manchester City Art Galleries
- 1994 'Antinomies', Mead Gallery, Warwick University and Tour
- 1991 'Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures', Cleveland Gallery, Bath
- 1991 'Paintings', King of Hearts, Norwich
- 1990 'Out of the Forest', Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield
- 1990 Chapter, Cardiff
- 1989 One Person Show, The Arts Council Gallery, Belfast
- 1988 'Drawings', Prema Arts Centre, Uley, Gloucestershire
- 1985 'Drawings, Sculptures and Reliefs', Leicestershire Museum & Art Gallery
- 1985 Rochdale Art Gallery
- 1984 'Drawings and Reliefs', Riverside Studios, London
- 1983 'Reliefs', Monica Kinley, London
- 1978 'White Work Wax Sculpture', House Gallery, London
- 1973 'Reliefs and Wax Sculpture', Marjorie Parr Gallery, London
- 1972 'A Retrospective 1945 – 1972', Whitechapel Art Gallery
- 1960 'Paintings', Arthur Jeffress Gallery, London
- 1958 'Paintings and Drawings', Woodstock Gallery, London

Collections

National Museum and Gallery of Wales
Victoria & Albert Museum
Contemporary Art Society for Wales
The Arts Council of England
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
New Hall, Cambridge
Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield
Leicester Museum
Nuffield Foundation
The Government Art Collection
Rugby Gallery & Museum

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