

VAN DOREN WAXTER

Tom Fairs in Color: Paintings and Drawings 1997-2007

September 10-November 2, 2019

23 E 73rd | 3rd Floor

Opening Reception: September 10, 6-8PM



Painting # 1, c.1990-5, Oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 36 1/4 inches (76.8 x 92.1 cm)

Van Doren Waxter is pleased to announce exclusive representation of the Estate of Tom Fairs. A highly anticipated exhibition of his rarely seen oils and paintings on paper, *Tom Fairs in Color: Paintings and Drawings 1997-2007*, will go on view at the gallery's 1907 townhouse from September 10 to November 2, 2019. Recognized for his exquisite black and white pencil drawings, the forthcoming exhibition is the first in the U.S. devoted to works in color by the late British artist made during the last 20 years of his life and follows his inclusion in the group survey *Drawn Together Again* (2019) at Flag Art Foundation in New York, NY. The gallery will also travel to the 2019 editions of Frieze Masters and Art Basel Miami Beach with work made by the artist.

The artist (b. 1925-d. 2007) is noted for an affecting body of work that evidences a great range of mark-making and gesture made by the hand with a quiet, skillful urgency. Born in London, England, Fairs studied stained glass design at the Royal College of Art, which would later contribute to a sense of structure in his compositions suffused with a sensitivity to light. As well, his training in European Post-Impressionist artists such as Pierre Bonnard would influence the all over patterning of his drawings and paintings that he made of the natural world depicting the environs of his beloved Hampstead Heath, a large ancient open area of land encompassing forests, ponds, and meadows. Through his living room window he could see the skyline of London which often appears in his work.

His vertical and horizontal works on paper many of them measuring as small as 4 x 5 ½ inches feature an accretion of details, and which Barry Schwabsky, writing in *Artforum* said "demonstrate an artist of real substance and ambition" and are striking for their "enormous variety and vivacity of the pencil marks...[and] as firm and clear as anything Cézanne would have aspired." They convey a sense of place without being about realism. The art critic John Yau enthused, that "with soft pencils Fairs got the light and variety of forms he saw in the park...eye and hand worked in tandem in a way that few artists achieve."

The artist's rarely seen paintings to go on view this fall are similarly characterized by a quality of intimacy and stillness and informed by a lifetime of looking and travel throughout England, Greece, Italy, and France. The undated *Chiltern Pond*, measuring 18 x 20 inches, is a lush, verdant oil on canvas that invokes the artist's comment that his work is "primarily in things seen: landscape, interiors, still life where, in the light of the imagination, the

commonplace may be transformed into the extraordinary.” An elegant mixed media on paper made with oilstick and crayon on paper measuring 30 x 22 inches reveals a Georgian house nestled into nature as if glimpsed through an open window.

About the artist

Tom Fairs was born in London, England and lived in Hampstead, England. He studied at the Hornsey School of Art from 1948 to 1950 and at the Royal College of Art from 1950 to 1954, where he studied stained glass design and subsequently received glass commissions for the next twenty years. He taught fine art and stage design from 1967 to 1987 at the Central School of Art and Design (now Central Saint Martin’s) in London, England. From 1963 to his death in 2007, the artist shared his life with the novelist Elisabeth Russell Taylor. Their attic flat is within close proximity to Hampstead Heath where, in his years of retirement from teaching, Fairs sketched daily. His work has been on view in solo exhibitions internationally, such as *Tom Fairs* (2012) at The Modern Institute in Glasgow, Scotland and *Tom Fairs: Homage to Bonnard* (2008) at The Mercer Art Gallery in Harrogate, Yorkshire and The New Grafton Gallery in London, England. He received solo exhibitions in New York City at Kerry Schuss (2011-2015). Fairs has been included in numerous group exhibitions, such as *Drawn Together Again* (2019) at Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY; *Gaze* (2018) at Van Doren Waxter, New York, NY; and *Outside* (2016) at Karma, Amagansett, NY, curated by Matthew Higgs. His work has been reviewed and featured in publications such as *Artforum*, *Bomb*, *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and elsewhere.

Gallery Information

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