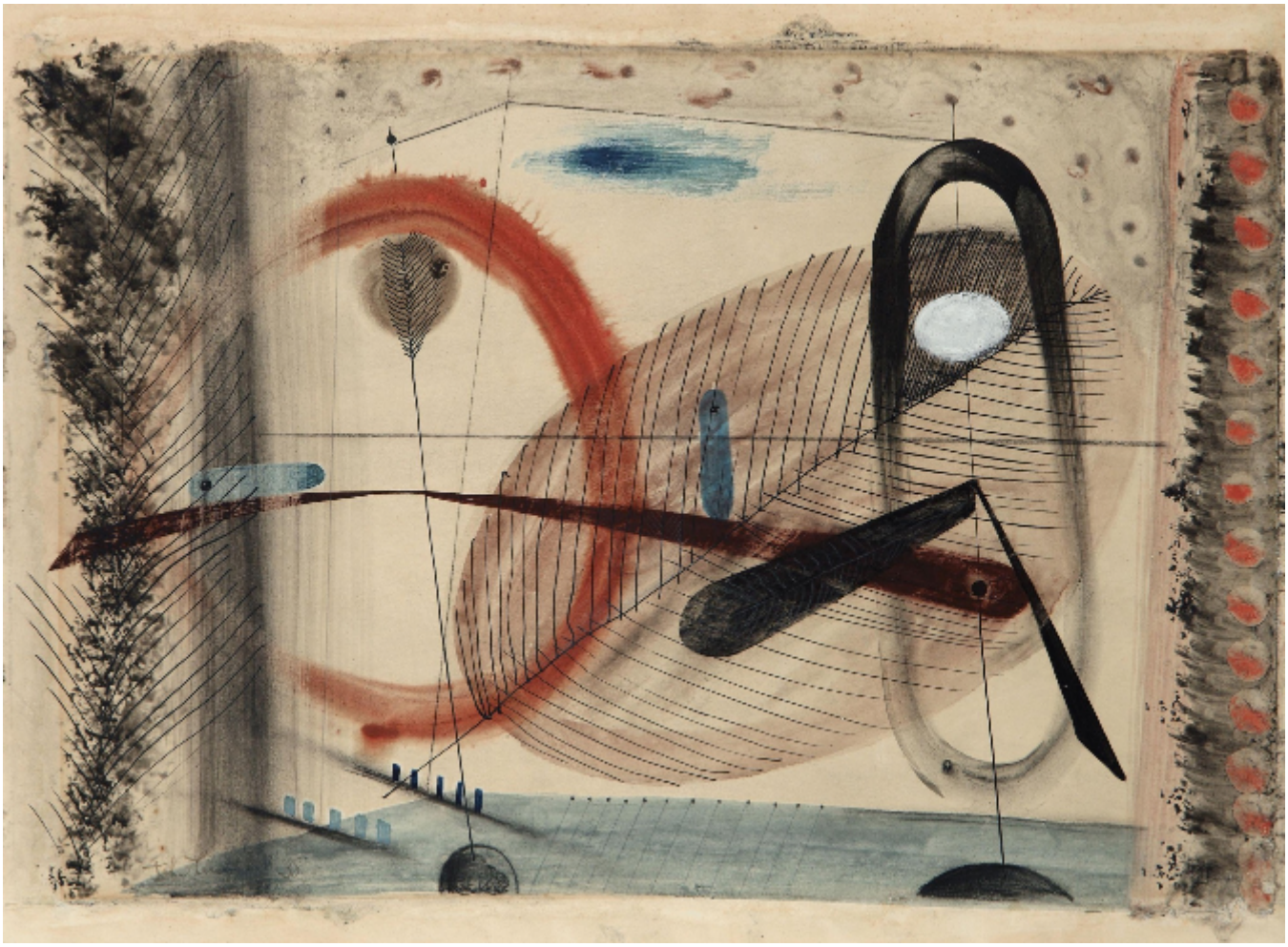
Untitled, 1938

John Tunnard

Sold



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REF: 10926

Description

Ink, charcoal and gouache
Sketch verso

Probably part of a series that Tunnard titled 'Drawing '(in spite of mixed media) in 1938

Sheet Height 26.5 cm., 10 ½ in., Length 37 cm., 14 5/8 in. In an ebonised, moulded frame
Frame Height 50 cm., 19 ½ in., Length 60.5 cm, 20 ¾ in

' His gouaches... were as musical as Kandinsky's, as delicate as Klee's, and as gay as Miro's' (Peggy Guggenheim)

The 1930s were a period of growing success for Tunnard, and by the end of the decade he was a fully established presence in the modern art scene. In 1933 he and his wife had settled in Cadgwith in Cornwall where for a time they supplemented their income by designing and producing printed silks. He had been showing with the London Group every year since 1931, and also had a first exhibition at the Redfern Gallery in 1933. The language of art was changing and Tunnard experimented with a range of abstract styles and approaches influenced by Klee, Miro and the constructivists.

' I think that I was influenced, most certainly influenced by other abstract painters…. Who were older than I…Joan Miro most certainly and Paul Klee, but possibly as much in respect for their technique as anything else. I think it is most important to have a good technique. To put any line down badly to me is a crime…..

Certain paintings of 1937 such as Bird and Composition (below) clearly illustrate Miro's influence on Tunnard's work. Untitled also shows this influence.

..I started certainly as a representational painter and moved through various phases of representationalism. First, I suppose, I was interested in merely trying to put down what I saw or thought I saw. Then, after that, I was more interested in merely trying to put down what I saw or thought I saw. Then, after that, I was more interested in the dramatic content of the landscape or whatever it was that I was painting, and then, more particularly, not so much with the literary dramatic content but with the geometrically dramatic content but with the geometrically dramatic content. By that I mean the dramatic movement of roads, of ruts sweeping into farmyards, of the lines of telegraph poles or the sweep of railings, and these I found myself exaggerating to get the geometrically dramatic. Of course, I go to the stage, when confronted with a landscape, I felt that I could not be bound by the things that I saw, and naturally the only thing to do was to invent. As soon as I started inventing I found that it was so much more exciting, and that inventing came gradually into what is called non-representational painting. ' Tunnard's account of his stylistic transformation in an interview in 1944.

In 1938 Tunnard met Peggy Guggenheim, who had recently opened the gallery Guggenheim Jeune at 30 Cork Street, and who was to become a significant figure for Tunnard, establishing his reputation internationally. In her 1960 autobiography Guggenheim recalls :

' One day a marvellous man in a highly elaborate tweed coat walked into the gallery. He looked like Groucho Marx. He was animated as a jazz-band leader; which he turned out to be. His colour was exquisite

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and his construct...

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