

BOROUGH

conversations

David Bomberg

+

Frank Auerbach

Dennis Creffield

Cliff Holden

Philip Holmes

Leon Kossoff

Edna Mann

Leslie Marr

Dorothy Mead

Miles Richmond

Garth Scott

BOROUGH: *conversations*

By the 1940s David Bomberg was a largely forgotten man. His dazzling early success had not continued during the inter-war period as critics and collectors struggled with his increasingly expressive and psychologically charged work. He was reduced to begging for commissions as a war artist and was routinely refused teaching positions at the mainstream academic colleges. He held a string of minor posts during the war years before, in 1945, accepting a role as tutor to the evening art class at the Borough Polytechnic (now London South Bank University).

Among his first students were artists such as Dorothy Mead, Edna Mann and Cliff Holden who had all been taught by him previously at the City Literary Institute in London. They were joined by Miles Richmond and Leslie Marr; the former a conscientious objector and the latter a technician in the RAF (both had already received some art tuition). These artists were a mix of worldly wise figures and impressionable teenagers who were drawn to the Borough classes by Bomberg's commanding presence and charisma. He recognised qualities in these artists which had been ignored by mainstream academia and his teaching was dynamic, anti-establishment and passionate.

Word soon spread among the art colleges in London, and more students gravitated towards the classes while continuing their studies at more academic institutions during the day. Two such figures, who had found themselves struggling at St Martin's School of Art, found Bomberg's classes both liberating and enabling. These artists were Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach. They in turn encouraged another St Martin's student, Philip Holmes, to attend.

While all the artists took something from Bomberg's teaching, some became more devoted to his doctrine of the 'Spirit in the Mass' than others. The most committed, under the early leadership of Holden, formed the Borough Group in 1946. After initially distancing himself from his student's group, Bomberg eventually joined and assumed the presidency. The group recruited other like-minded artists, including a fresh-faced 17 year old by the name of Dennis Creffield. The evangelical nature fostered within the Group was far less appealing to Auerbach and Kossoff who refused to exhibit alongside the members.

Conflicting personalities and shared commercial struggles placed the Group under great strain and it eventually dissolved amidst acrimony in the spring of 1951. By this time, many of the original students such as Mead and Richmond had begun to follow their own path and a fresh generation of artists joined the classes. They coalesced under a second group called the Borough Bottega whose numbers included Garth Scott. The Bottega survived beyond Bomberg's tenure at the Polytechnic which ended 1954. Bomberg died at St Thomas' hospital, London, in 1957.

This is a hugely abbreviated history of the period, populated only with artists who feature in the presentation. This exhibition, our third devoted to the subject, is an attempt to make specific comparisons between individual artworks, thus highlighting both the similarities and differences in approach between a group who are often accused of possessing a uniform style. This is not intended as a general overview of the Borough students, of the Borough Group or of the Borough Bottega, which was largely covered in our first two exhibitions.

The artists who are represented on these pages represent a wide cross section of British society. Their numbers include a card-carrying Communist, a Formula 1 racing driver, an anarchist and a primary school headteacher. They are unified by their commitment to paint honestly, without irony or artifice. They are committed to describing what they see and feel without filtering it through a prism of academic technique or contemporary criticism. This was why they were uniformly neglected in their early careers but equally why many are rising to far greater prominence now.



Commentary on individual works has been deliberately avoided as the viewer is invited to draw their own conclusions with regards to the juxtapositions presented. The viewer is asked to ignore art market preconceptions and the current reputations of the figures involved. When these artists were studying under Bomberg they were equals, and while Bomberg exhibited alongside his students, so was he to them. However, more information on the individual artists featured in this presentation can be viewed on our website or by contacting the gallery.

I am very grateful to the help and support offered by the families of Dorothy Mead, Dennis Creffield, Cliff Holden, Philip Holmes, Garth Scott and Edna Mann. I am equally grateful to Leslie Marr for his agreement to participate and to all the private collectors who have lent works. Finally I would like to thank Piano Nobile and Messum's Fine Art for their contributions. Producing these survey exhibitions is never particularly easy, but during lock-down, when visiting storage facilities and arranging logistics are not straightforward, it is especially hard. It would be impossible without the efforts of the above.

This is a selling exhibition, although for curatorial purposes we have included a small number of loan items. For more information on pricing and availability, please contact the gallery.

Jamie Anderson

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Illustrated above:

A life class at the Borough Polytechnic (photographer unknown)

David Bomberg can be seen wearing a white coat.

The tall figure to his left is Miles Richmond, the shorter figure to his right is Cliff Holden



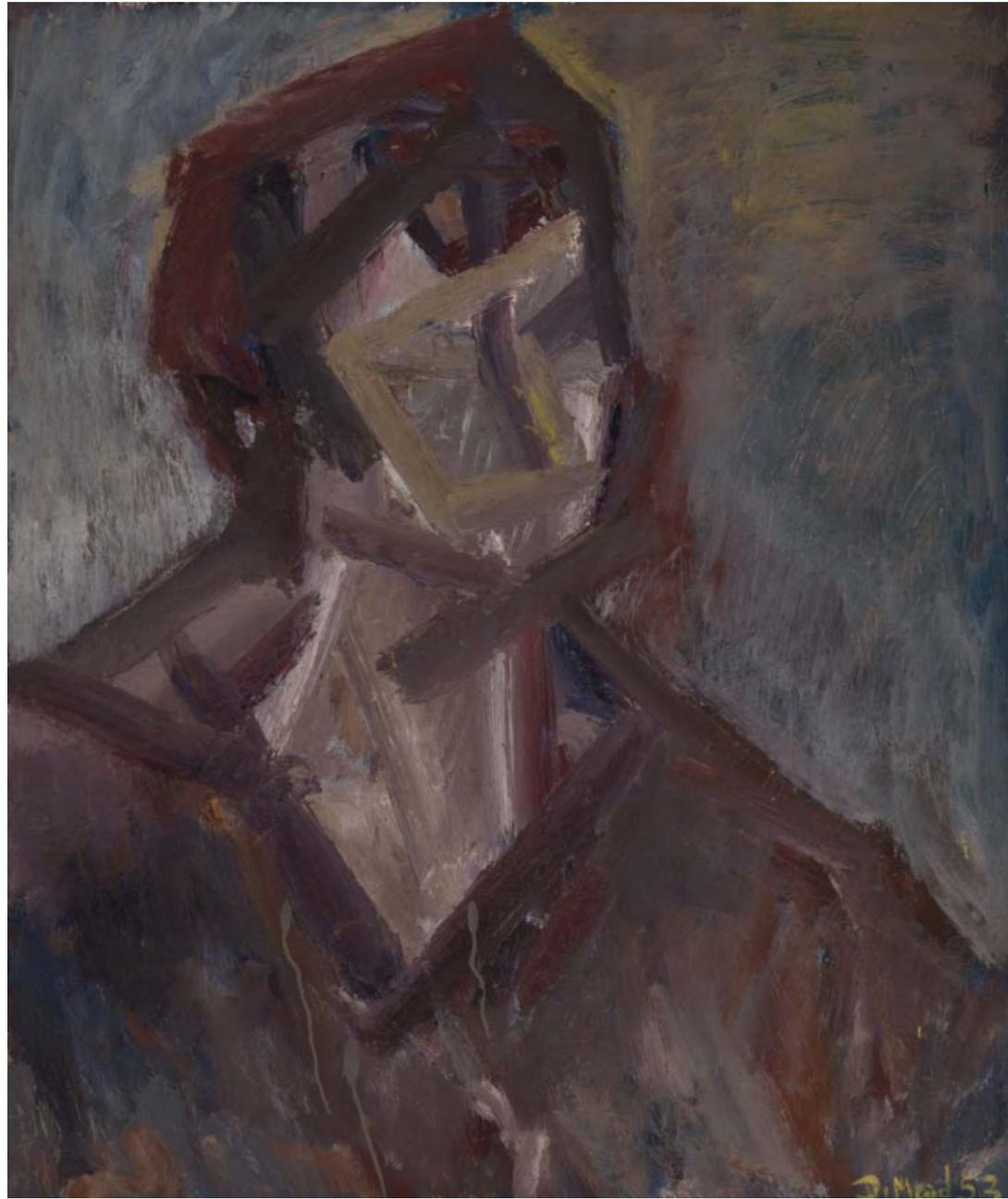
DAVID BOMBERG 1890-1957
Arab woman kneading dough, 1923
Signed & dated
Oil on canvas
35.5 x 43 cm / 14 x 17 in

Provenance:
Private collection, UK



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018
Seated figure, circa 1960
Oil on canvas
58.5 x 45.5 cm / 23 x 18 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Self-Portrait, 1953

Signed & dated

Oil on board

74 x 62 cm / 29 x 24.5 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



FRANK AUERBACH b.1931

Head of Julia in Profile II, 1989

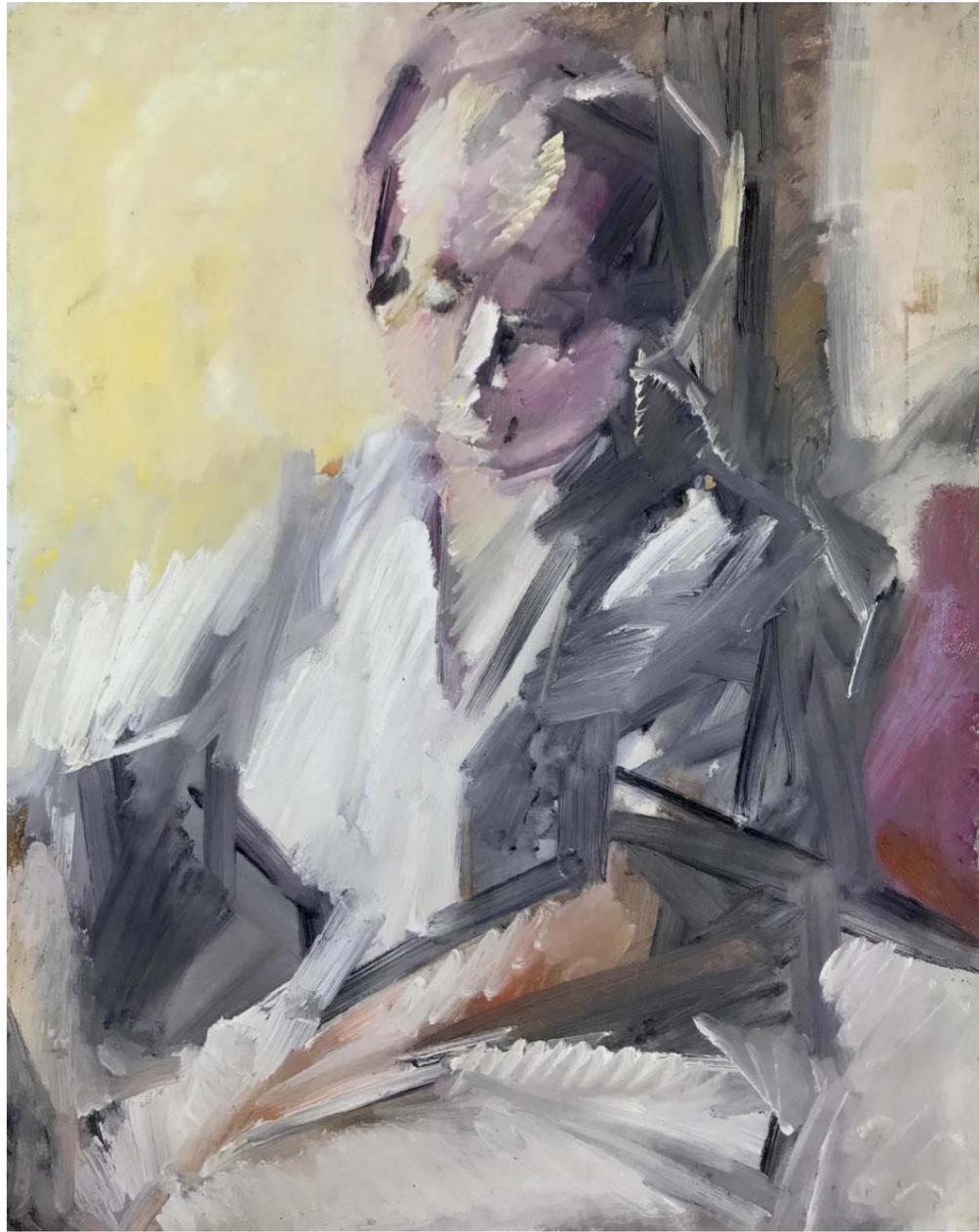
Charcoal on paper

75 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:

Marlborough Fine Art, London

Private collection UK (acquired from the above in 1990)



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Rose, circa 1960

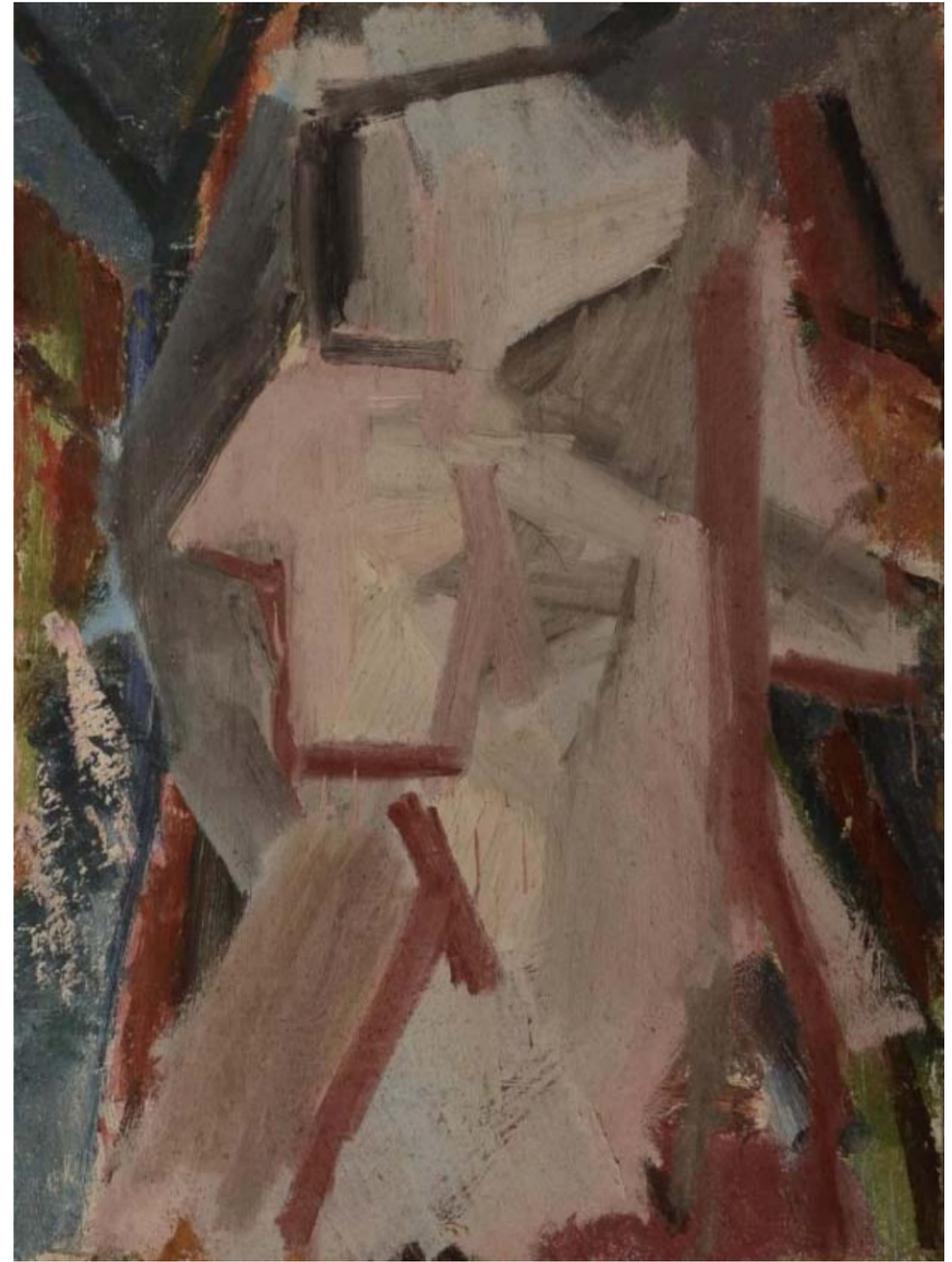
Signed & titled on reverse

Oil on canvas

92 x 71 cm / 36 x 28 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



MILES RICHMOND 1922-2008

Borough portrait study, 1948

Oil on board

76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Self portrait, 1947

Signed, titled & dated on label on reverse

Oil on board

76 x 61 cm / 30 x 24 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DAVID BOMBERG 1890-1957

Portrait of Adriaan Beale, 1944

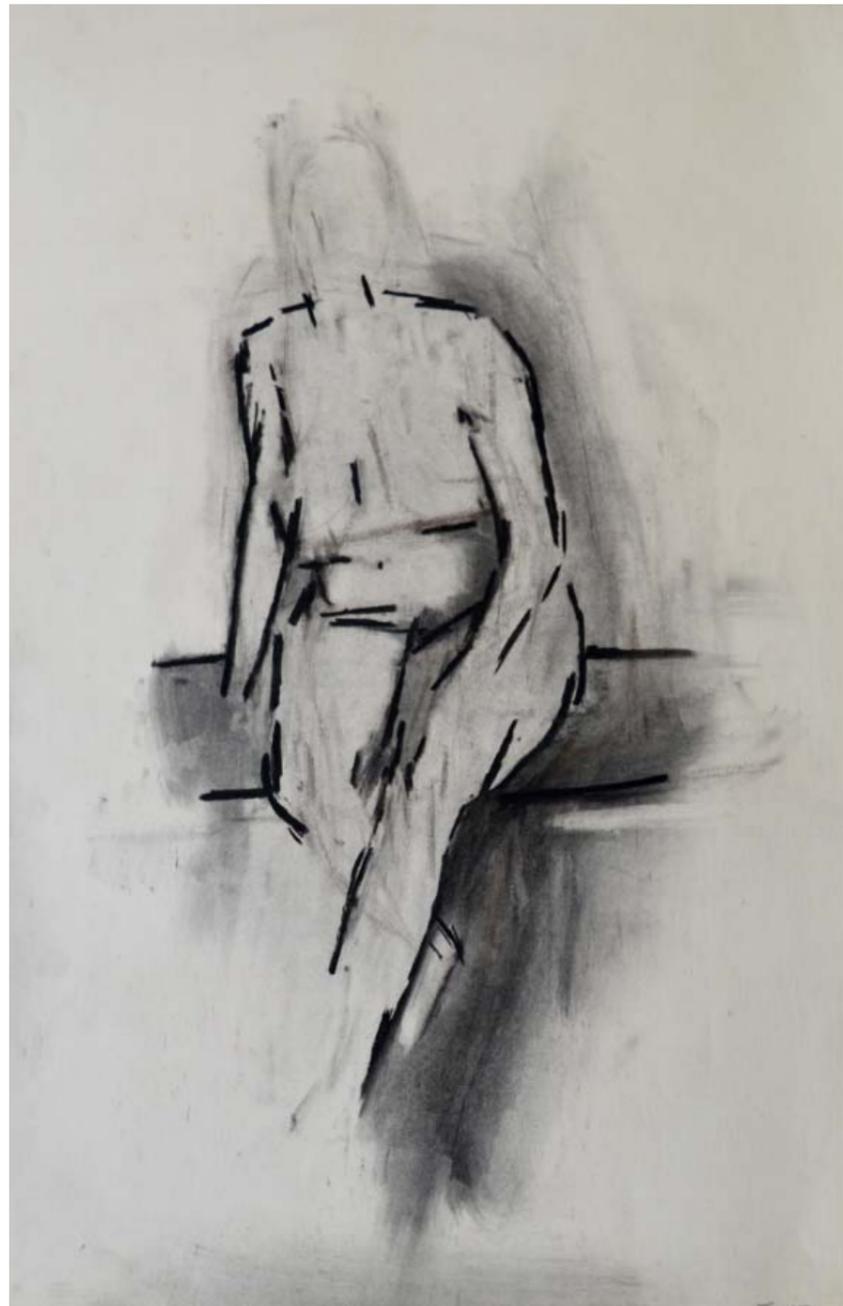
Signed & dated

Charcoal & red chalk on paper

60 x 48 cm / 23.5 x 19 in

Provenance:

Piano Nobile



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Seated figure, 1967

Dated

Charcoal on paper

76 x 51 cm / 30 x 20 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



LEON KOSSOFF 1926-2019

Pauline no.1, 1984

Oil on board

45.5 x 51 cm / 18 x 20 in

Provenance:

Private collection, UK



EDNA MANN 1926-1985

Life class at the Borough Polytechnic, circa 1947

Charcoal on paper

76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Seated nude, 1963

Dated

Charcoal on paper

76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Figure composition, 1981

Signed, titled & dated on verso

Oil on board

91.5 x 127 cm / 36 x 50 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DAVID BOMBERG 1890-1957

The family, 1920

Signed

Oil on paper

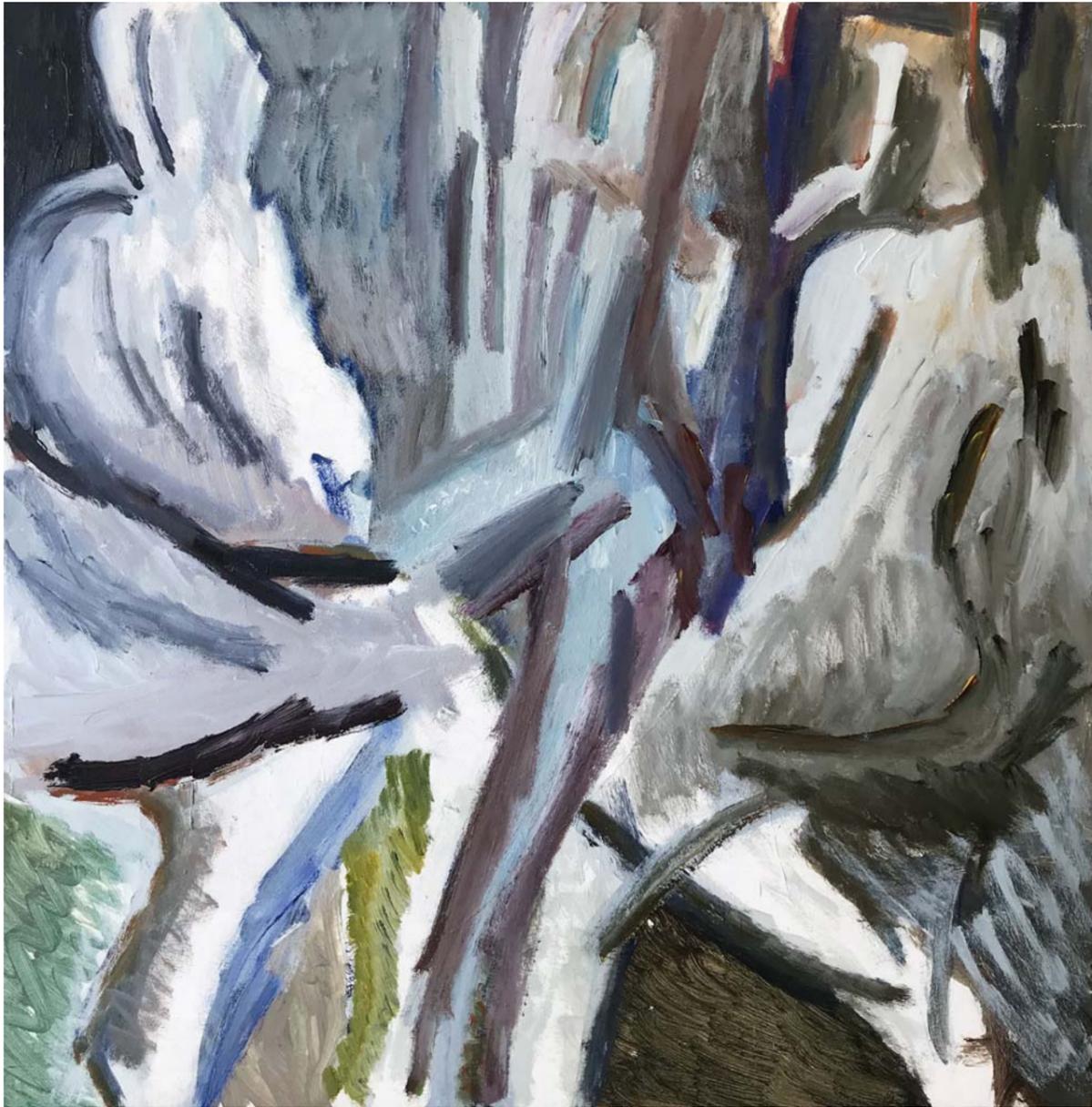
42 x 32 cm / 16.5 x 12.5 in

Provenance:

Anthony D'Offay Fine Art

Gillian Jason Gallery

Private collection, UK



CLIFF HOLDEN 1919-2020

Three Graces, 1975

Acrylic on board

122 x 122 cm / 48 x 48 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



LEON KOSSOFF 1926-2019

Bathers in a swimming pool, circa 1970

Signed

Pencil & charcoal on paper

36 x 51 cm / 14 x 20 in

Provenance:

Private collection, USA



CLIFF HOLDEN BRITISH 1919-2020

Bathers, 1975

Acrylic on board

122 x 122 cm / 48 x 48 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Figures in a landscape, circa 1960

Signed on verso

Oil on board

42 x 48.5 in / 106.5 x 122.5 cm

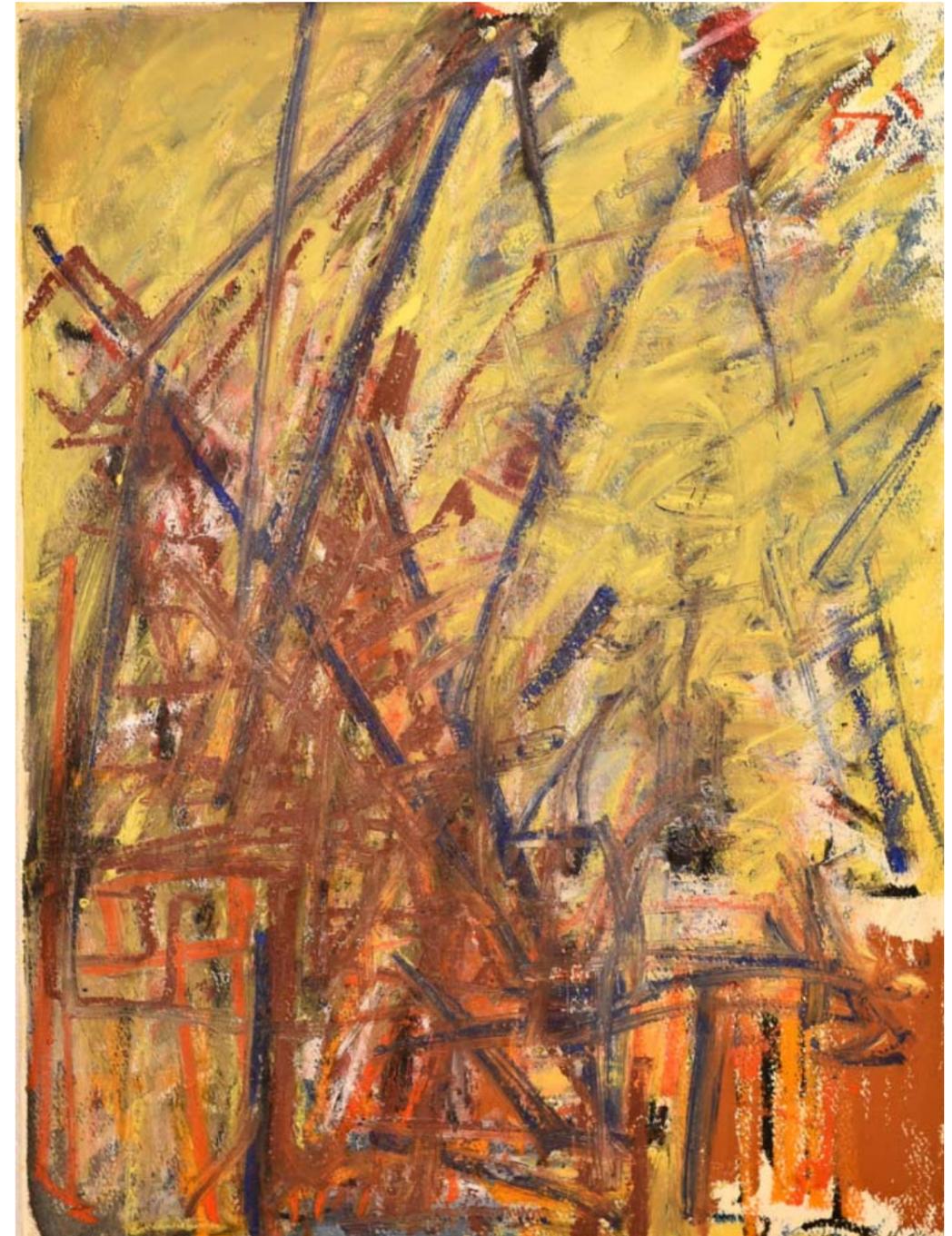
Provenance:

The estate of the artist



FRANK AUERBACH b.1931
Study for 'To the Studios', 1990-1991
Ink on paper
33.5 x 29.5 cm / 13 x 11.5 in

Provenance:
Marlborough Fine Art, London
Private collection (acquired from above in 2016)



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018
City of London, 1997
Signed, titled & dated on verso
Oil on paper
76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



CLIFF HOLDEN 1919-2020
London landscape, 1950
Signed, titled & dated on reverse
Oil on board
91 x 122 cm / 35 6/8 x 48 1/8 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist
Private collection, UK



MILES RICHMOND 1922-2008
View over Southwark, 1993
Signed & dated
Oil on board
120 x 120 cm / 47 x 47 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Rooftops, June 1969

Charcoal on paper

56 x 76 cm / 22 x 30 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Greenwich from the Royal Observatory, 1960

Signed on verso

Charcoal on paper

56 x 76 cm / 22 x 30 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Magdalene College Cambridge, Pepys Library, 1992

Signed, titled & dated on reverse

Oil on canvas

51 x 63.5 cm / 20 x 25 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



LESLIE MARR b.1922

The Barle in Winter, 1963-4

Signed & dated

Oil on canvas

91.5 x 91.5 cm / 36 x 36 in

Provenance:

The studio of the artist



GARTH SCOTT 1931-2013
Trees at Abbey Farm, circa 1990
Charcoal on paper
52 x 68 cm / 20.5 x 26.5 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



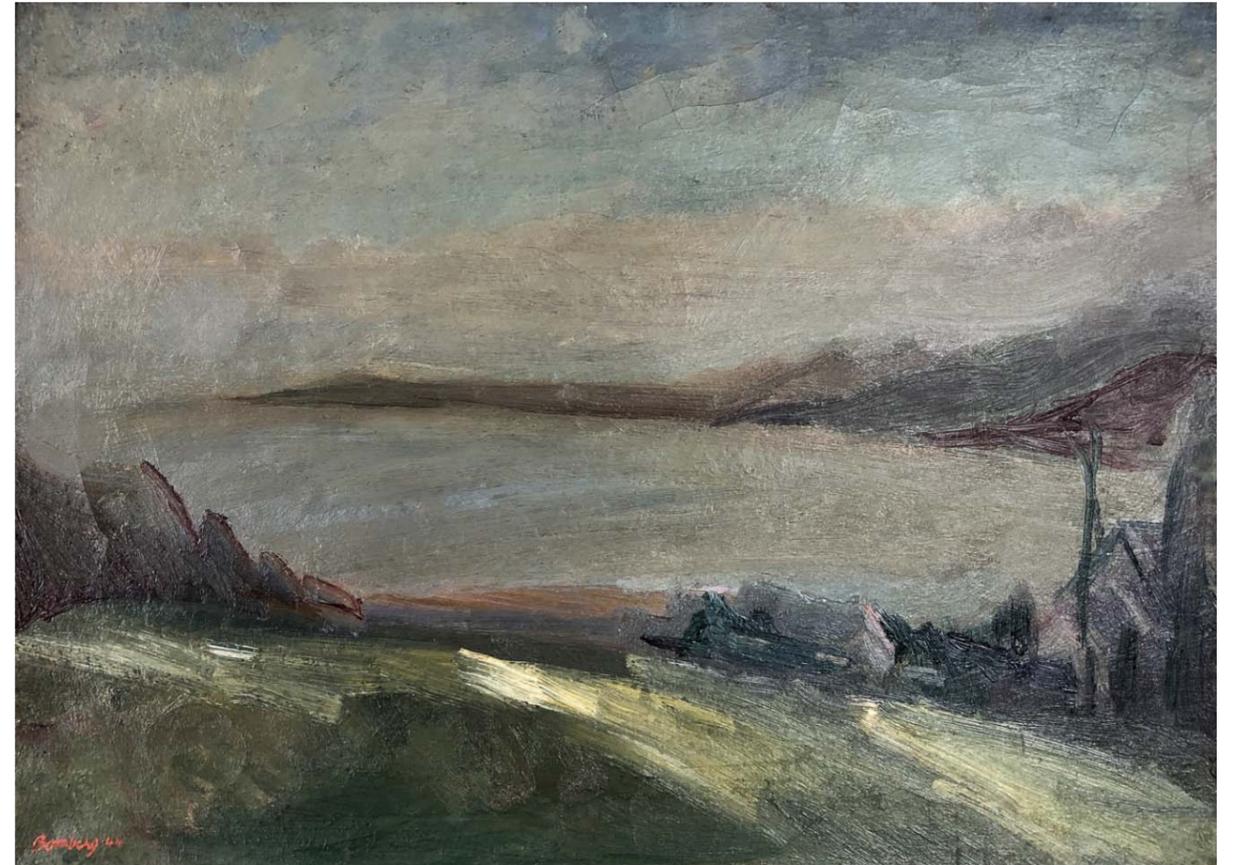
LESLIE MARR b.1922
Mont St Victoire, 1963
Signed & dated
Oil on canvas
73 x 91.5 cm / 28.5 x 36 in

Provenance:
The studio of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975
Kentish landscape, June 1968
Charcoal on paper
56 x 76 cm / 22 x 30 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



DAVID BOMBERG 1890-1957
Red Wharf Bay, 1944
Signed & dated
Oil on canvas
51 x 76 cm / 20 x 30 in

Provenance:
Private collection, UK



DAVID BOMBERG 1890-1957

Cuenca, 1934

Signed, titled & dated

Pencil on paper

36 x 51 cm / 14 x 20 in

Provenance:

Family of the artist



PHILIP HOLMES 1924-2007

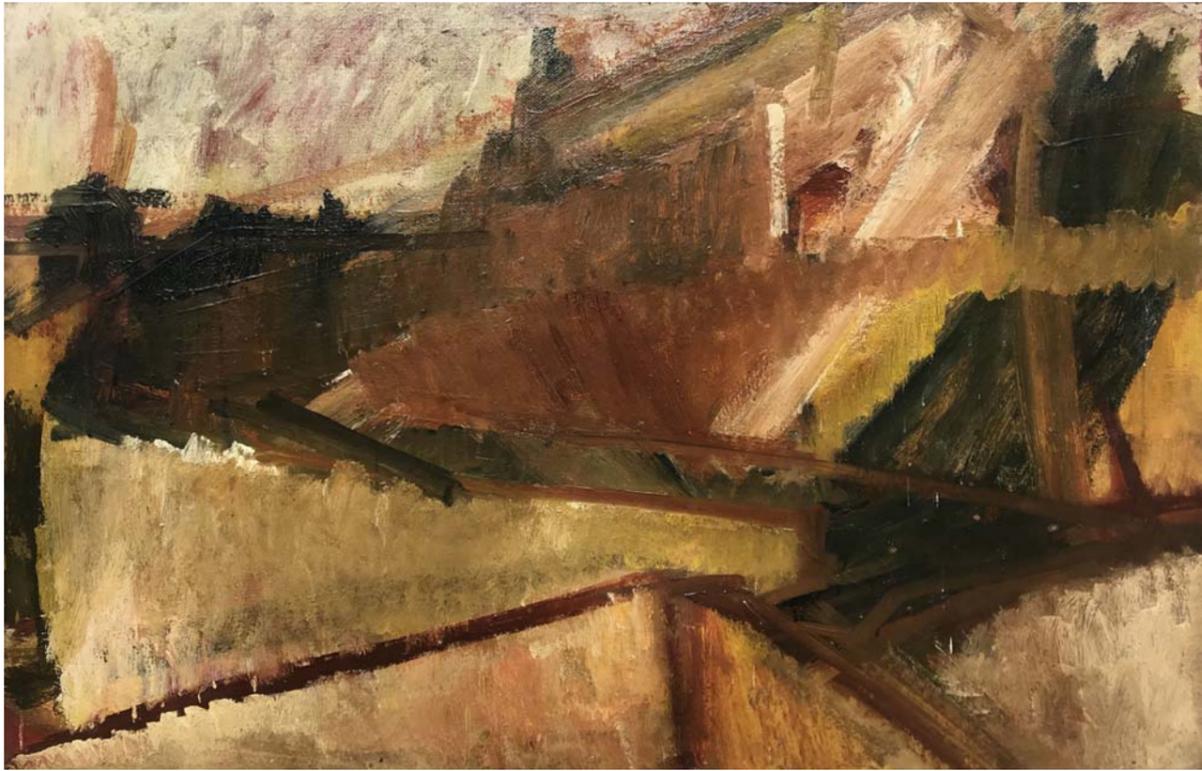
Ronda, circa 1960

Charcoal on paper

102 x 69 cm / 40 x 27 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



GARTH SCOTT 1931-2013

Azucarera, 1953

Signed & dated

Oil on board

61 x 91 cm / 24 x 36 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Azucarera, Larios, Torrox, 1953

Signed, titled & dated on reverse

Oil on board

61 x 91 cm / 24 x 36 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



GARTH SCOTT 1931-2013
Viaduct in Ronda, circa 1955
Charcoal on paper
49 x 62 cm / 19.5 x 24.5 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



MILES RICHMOND 1922-2008
Grazalema, Andalusia, 1959
Signed & dated
Charcoal on paper
69 x 97 cm / 27 x 38 in

Provenance:
Laurie Stewart Fine Art (acquired from the artist)



PHILIP HOLMES 1924-2007
Mures Rock, Montejaque, circa 1960
Charcoal on paper
56 x 77 cm / 22 x 30 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



MILES RICHMOND 1922-2008
Grazalema, 1960
Oil on canvas
65 x 76 cm / 25.5 x 30 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



PHILIP HOLMES 1924-2007

Glen Coe, circa 1955

Signed

Oil on board

111 x 136 cm / 43.5 x 53.5 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



LESLIE MARR b.1922

Glen Ceitlin, 1976

Signed & dated

Oil on canvas

102 x 127 cm / 40 x 50 in

Provenance:

The studio of the artist



EDNA MANN 1926-1985

Southwark, 1946

Charcoal on paper

76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Durham Cathedral West End across the River Weir, 1987

Signed, titled & dated on verso

Charcoal on paper

76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



MILES RICHMOND 1922-2008
Durham Cathedral, 1980
Charcoal on paper
59 x 78 cm / 23.5 x 30.5 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018
Bristol Cathedral, 1987
Signed, titled & dated on verso
Charcoal on paper
101 x 92.5 cm / 39.5 x 36.5 in

Provenance:
The estate of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Interior of a church, 1966

Dated

Charcoal on paper

38 x 56 cm / 15 x 22 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DAVID BOMBERG 1890-1957

The Round Church, Middle Temple, 1944

Charcoal on paper

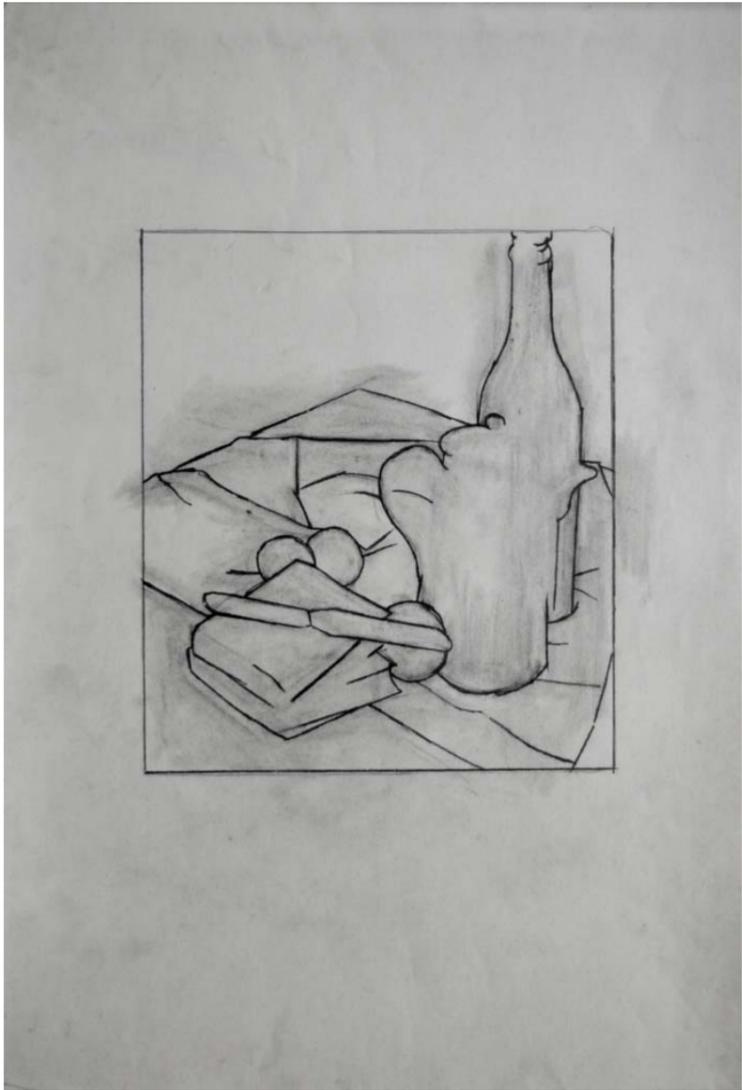
45.5 x 61 cm / 18 x 24 in

Provenance:

Marlborough Fine Art, London

Private Collection, UK

Piano Nobile



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Still life, circa 1968

Charcoal on paper

56 x 38 cm / 22 x 15 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DENNIS CREFFIELD 1931-2018

Still life, 1960

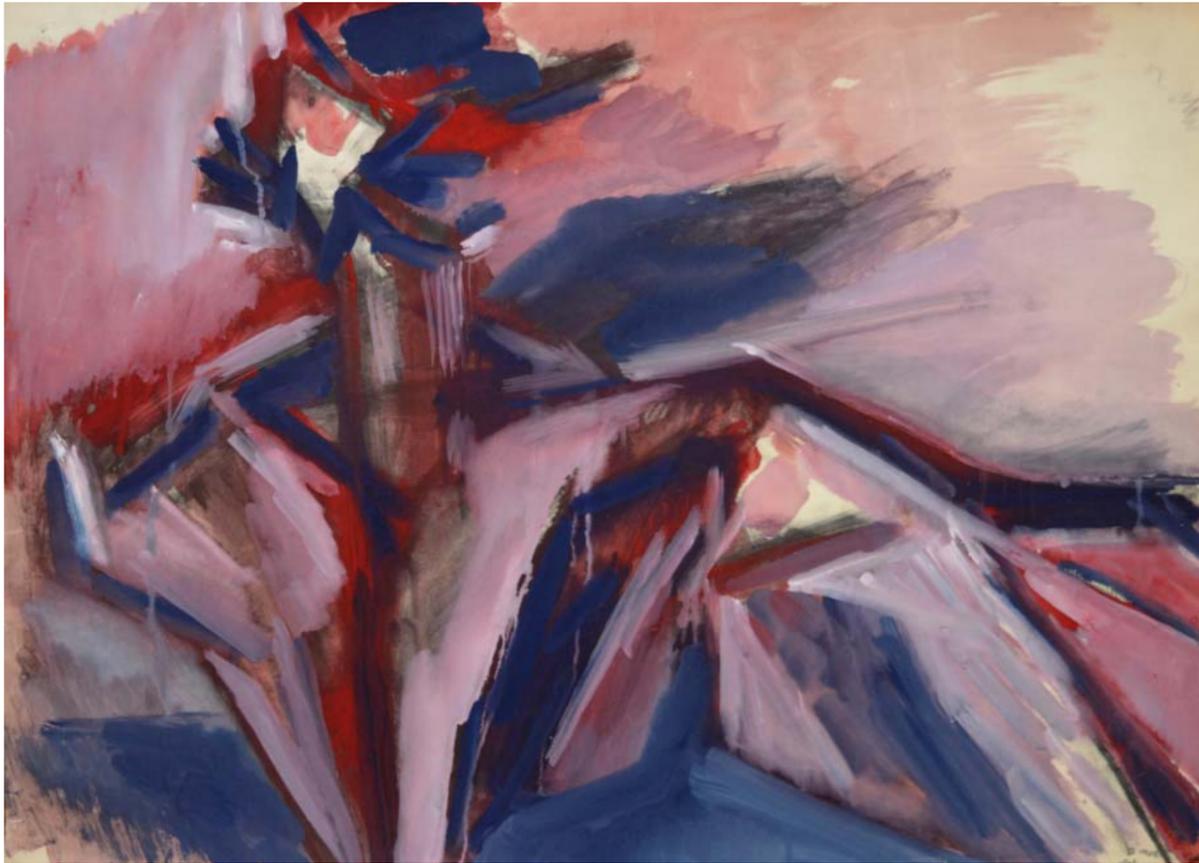
Signed

Oil on canvas

76.5 x 102 cm / 30 x 40 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



DOROTHY MEAD 1928-1975

Still life with flowers, 1957

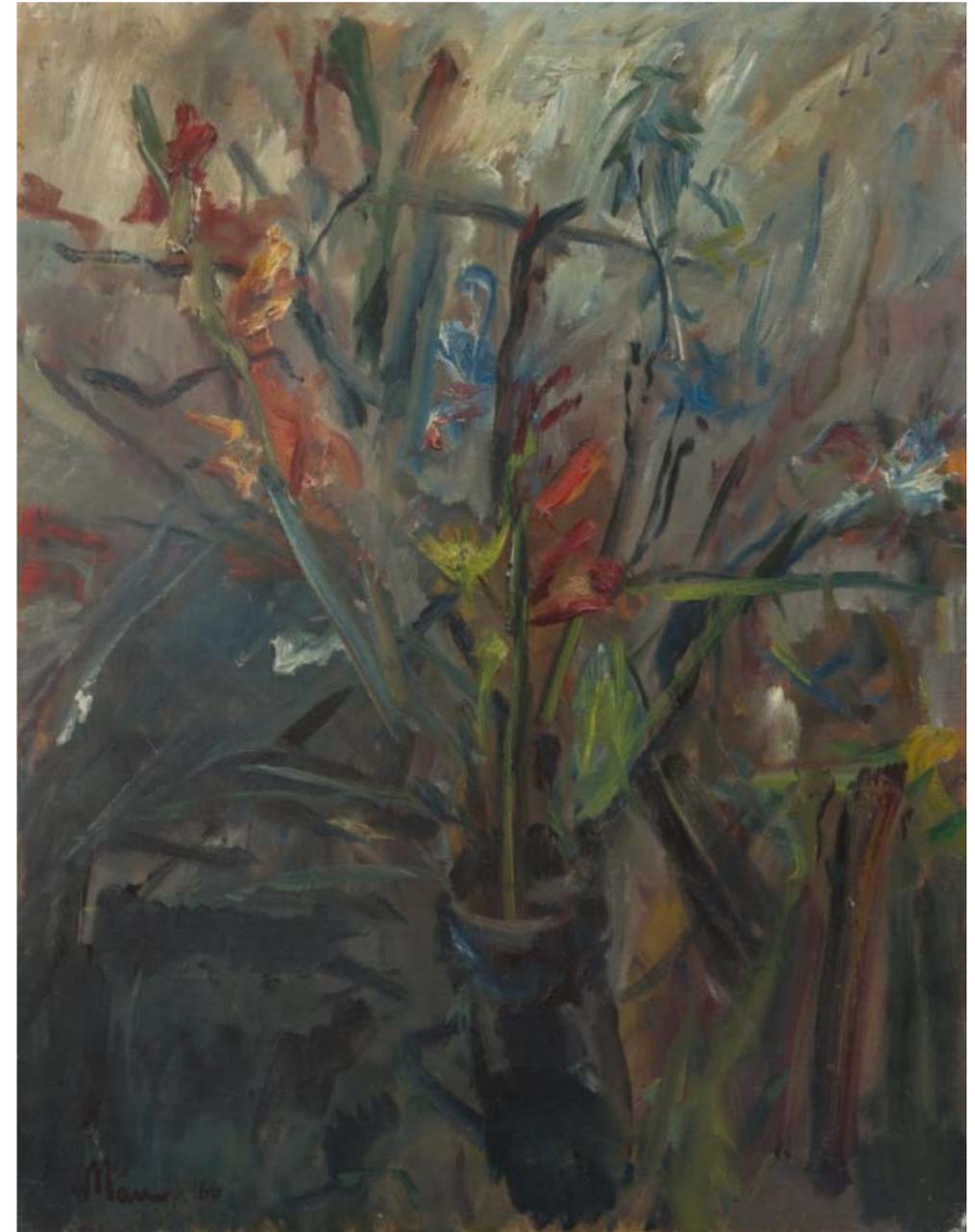
Signed & dated

Gouache on paper

56 x 76 cm / 22 x 30 in

Provenance:

The estate of the artist



LESLIE MARR b.1922

Flowers in a Jug, 1966

Signed & dated

Oil on canvas

91.5 x 71 cm / 36 x 28 in

Provenance:

The studio of the artist