

Alive from edge to edge

an introduction to

LEONARD McCOMB RA

1930-2018

works may be viewed by appointment at

WATERHOUSE & DODD

16 Savile Row London W1S 3PL

+44 (0)20 7734 7800 / jamie@waterhousedodd.com

www.waterhousedodd.com

Works can also be viewed in the artist's south London studio

please call or email Jamie Anderson for further details.

All works may be viewed online at waterhousedodd.com/artists/90-leonard-mccomb/works/
and are available for purchase.

Waterhouse & Dodd are the exclusive representatives of the Leonard McComb Estate

All artworks illustrated in this catalogue are sourced directly from the estate.

All testimonials were supplied during November 2019 with specific reference to this brochure.

“Although his work was always based on direct observation, McComb’s intuitive interpretation of nature was a very particular distillation of what he saw. Whether he was painting a portrait, a still-life or a landscape, light and colour were what mattered most — especially an inner light. McComb favoured an interlocking of the spiritual and physical that was essentially Blakean. McComb’s art partakes of the classical but also the symbolic. Finely attuned to the reverberations of things, it never forces itself upon the attention, but insinuates its meaning and promotes contemplation. His finest paintings are simply radiant.”

ANDREW LAMBIRTH

Art Critic and Writer



Peaches and Pears, 2008
Oil on canvas
28.75 x 36.5 in / 73 x 92.5 cm



Figs, Lemons and Peaches, 2016

Oil on canvas

12 x 15.5 in / 30 x 40 cm

“There is something unmistakable about the network of marks created by Leonard McComb that is hard to forget, and I think there are few British figurative painters working today who don't owe something to him. He was always there quietly in the background, and his sensitive understated pictures exude a sort of authority and authenticity that you can't fake. As with the drawings of David Jones, his best works exhibit a unique shimmering delicacy of technique and a poetic integrity that can be regarded as a benchmark to aspire to. He was a true one-off.”

MICHAEL TAYLOR

Artist, member of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters.



Still Life with Persian Rug, 1998

Watercolour on paper

28.75 x 41 in / 73 x 104 cm



River Trout, 2016
Watercolour on paper
9.5 x 12 in / 24 x 30.5 cm

“One of Leonard McComb's most treasured possessions from student days was a book on Blake given to him by his father shortly before he died. It was a gift of the most remarkable prescience, implicit with those elements of poetic and visionary insight that have, more than 70 years on, come to place McComb among the most distinctive and original voices of his late 20th century generation. Look at a portrait by Leonard McComb, for example, and you see a painting in which every part of the surface – face, clothes, chair, background - takes on an equal significance, of acute observation and then intense description, everything pulsing with dense, delicate touches of line and colour, ‘the minutely organised particulars’ of Blake's world arrived at by staring at Nature as well as through the imagination.”

NICHOLAS USHERWOOD

Art Critic and Curator

Portrait of Paola Ceraglio, 1997

Watercolour on paper

12 x 10 in / 30 x 26 cm



Portrait of a Lady with a Headscarf, circa 1999
Oil on canvas board
17 x 25.5 in / 43 x 62 cm



“I very much liked and admired Leonard McComb, both as an artist and as a person. I first got to know him when Doris Lessing selected him as the artist for her portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, a work which is unusually considered and represents her personality with intelligent empathy. When I became Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal Academy, he asked if he could paint my portrait, so I spent a lot of time with him in the lead-up to the Summer Exhibition 2008 where it was exhibited. He had a whimsical and unworldly aspect to him, but I admired him for precisely these attributes.”

CHARLES SAUMAREZ SMITH

Secretary and Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Arts (2007-2018)

Portrait of Doris Lessing, 1999

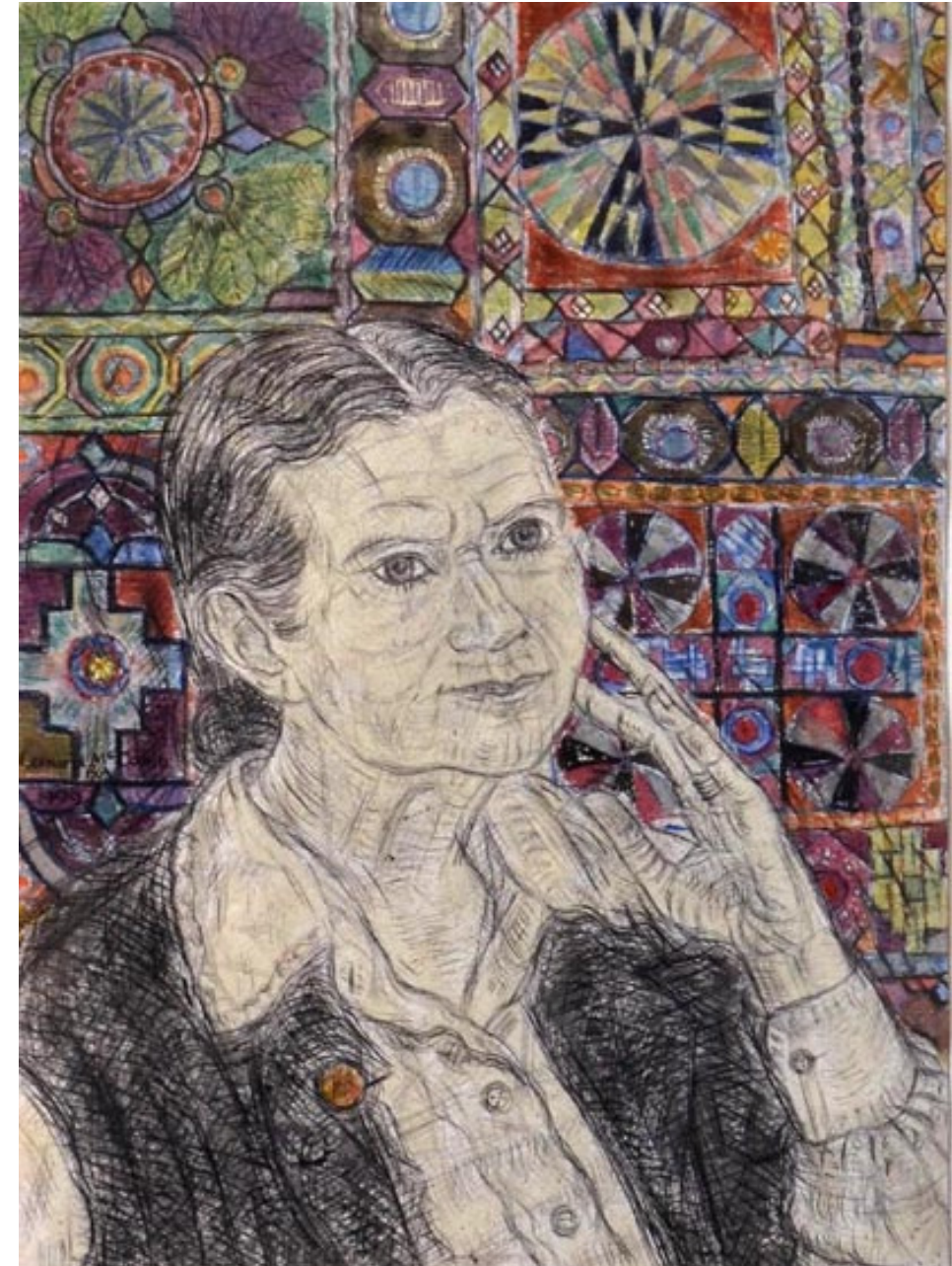
Mixed media on paper

25 x 21.25 in / 64 x 54 cm

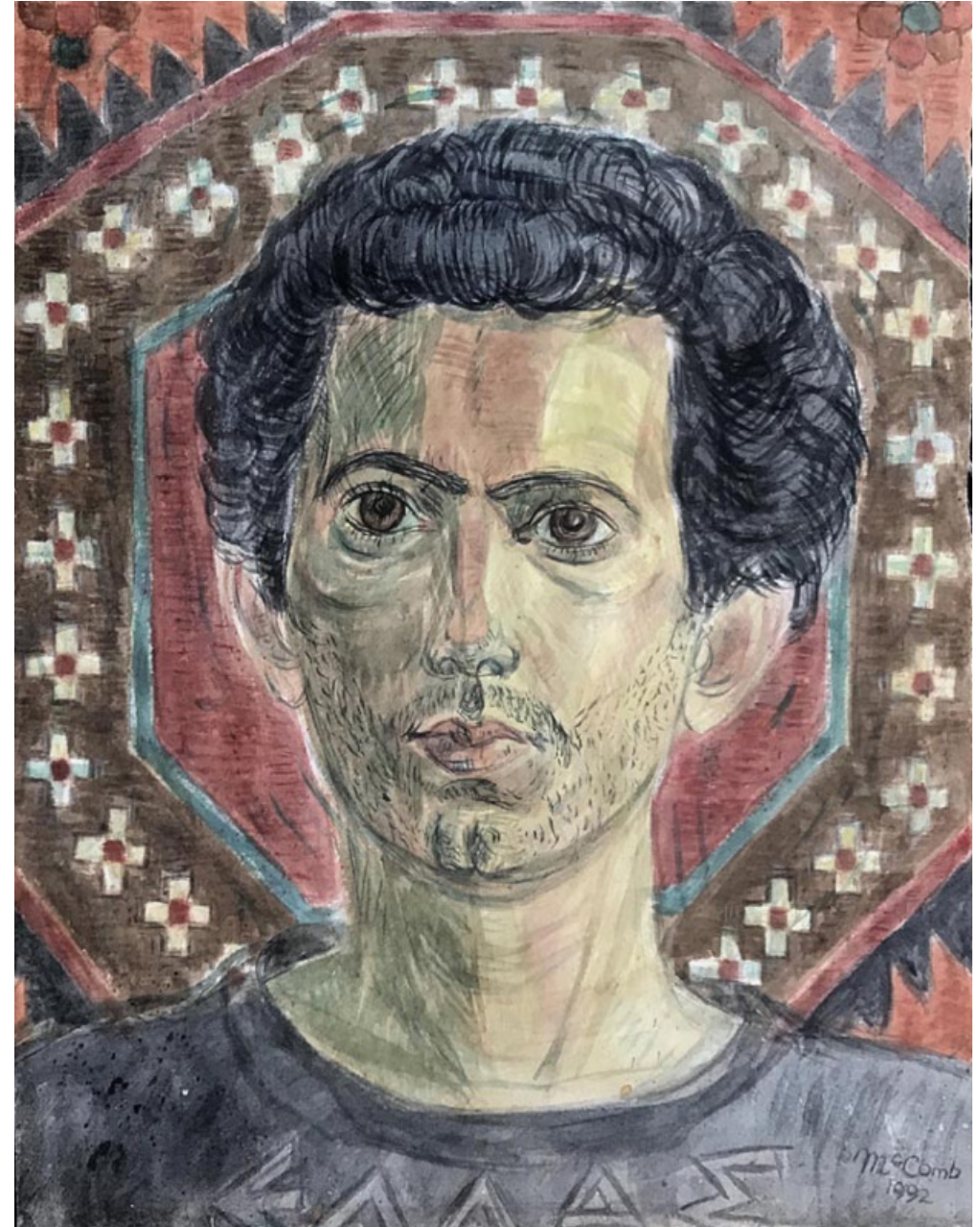
The National Portrait Gallery, London, holds three further portraits of this sitter by McComb

A large oil is currently on display in room 32 of the NPG

A further oil study is on display at Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich



Portrait of a Young Man, 1992
Watercolour, pencil & ink on paper
17 x 13 in / 43 x 33.5 cm



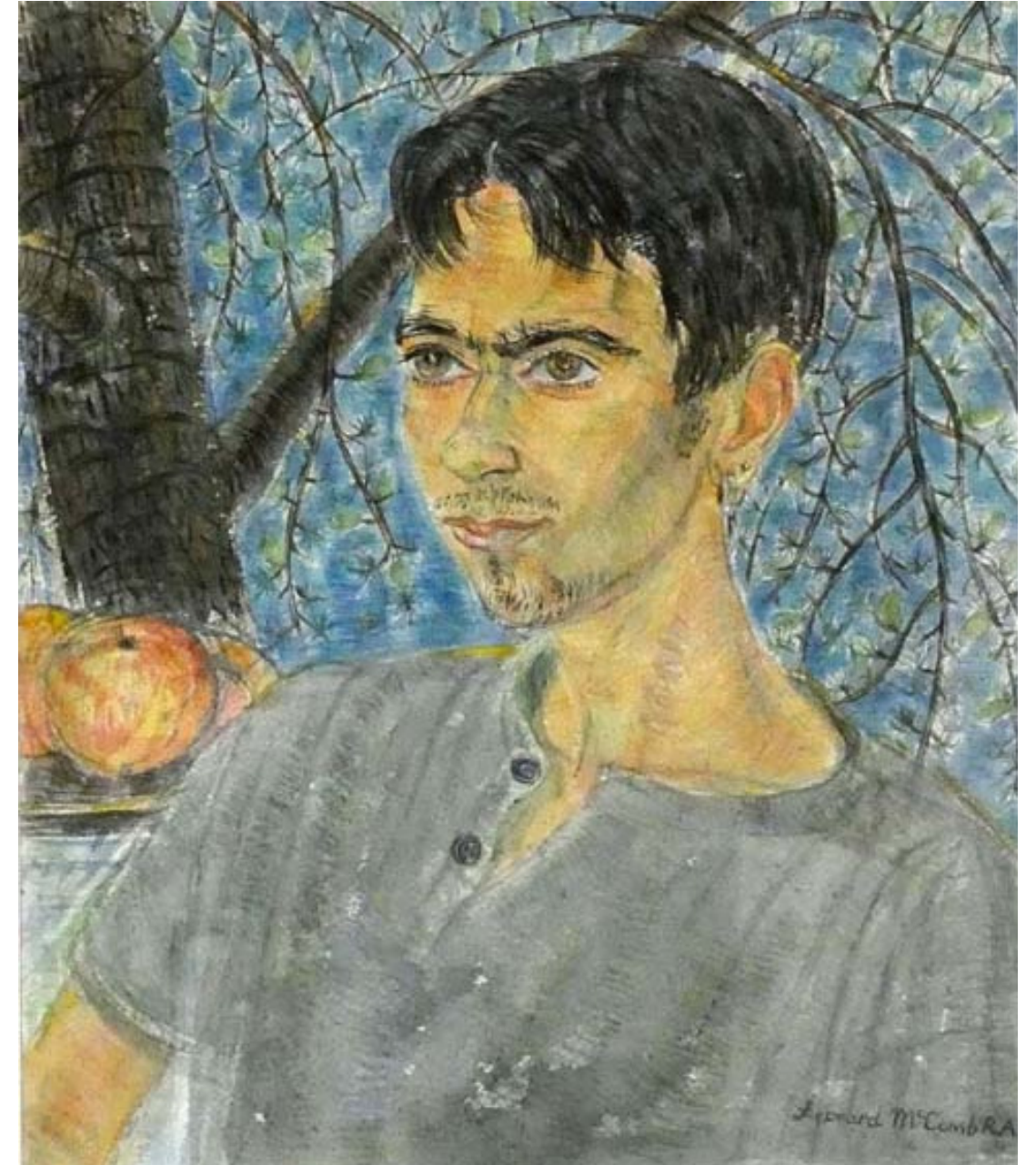
"I loved that Len chose to make portraits and that he used watercolour. It was an unusual choice at that time if you were ambitious to make a life in the art world but he was fully aware of what he was doing."

HUMPHREY OCEAN R.A.

Artist

Portrait of Leonardo Ceraglio, 1997

Watercolour on paper
12 x 10 in / 30 x 26 cm



Two Lovers, 1992
Ceramic
21 in / 53 cm diameter





Reclining Nude, 2010
Monoprint
15 x 22 in / 38.5 x 55.5 cm



Standing Nude with Mirror, 2010
Monoprint
24 x 18.5 in / 60.5 x 47.5 cm

“All collectors experience love at first sight, but the best pictures are those which give ever greater pleasure as time passes. We acquired our first LM in 1995, a proof of ‘Cat, Blackbird and Thrush’. We later got to know Leonard and acquired others. Today, after 24 years of loving scrutiny, they all continue to deliver fresh pleasure - with their dancing lines, rich tonality and rhythmic colour. Fall in love with a McComb at first sight, enjoy a lifetime of enchantment!”

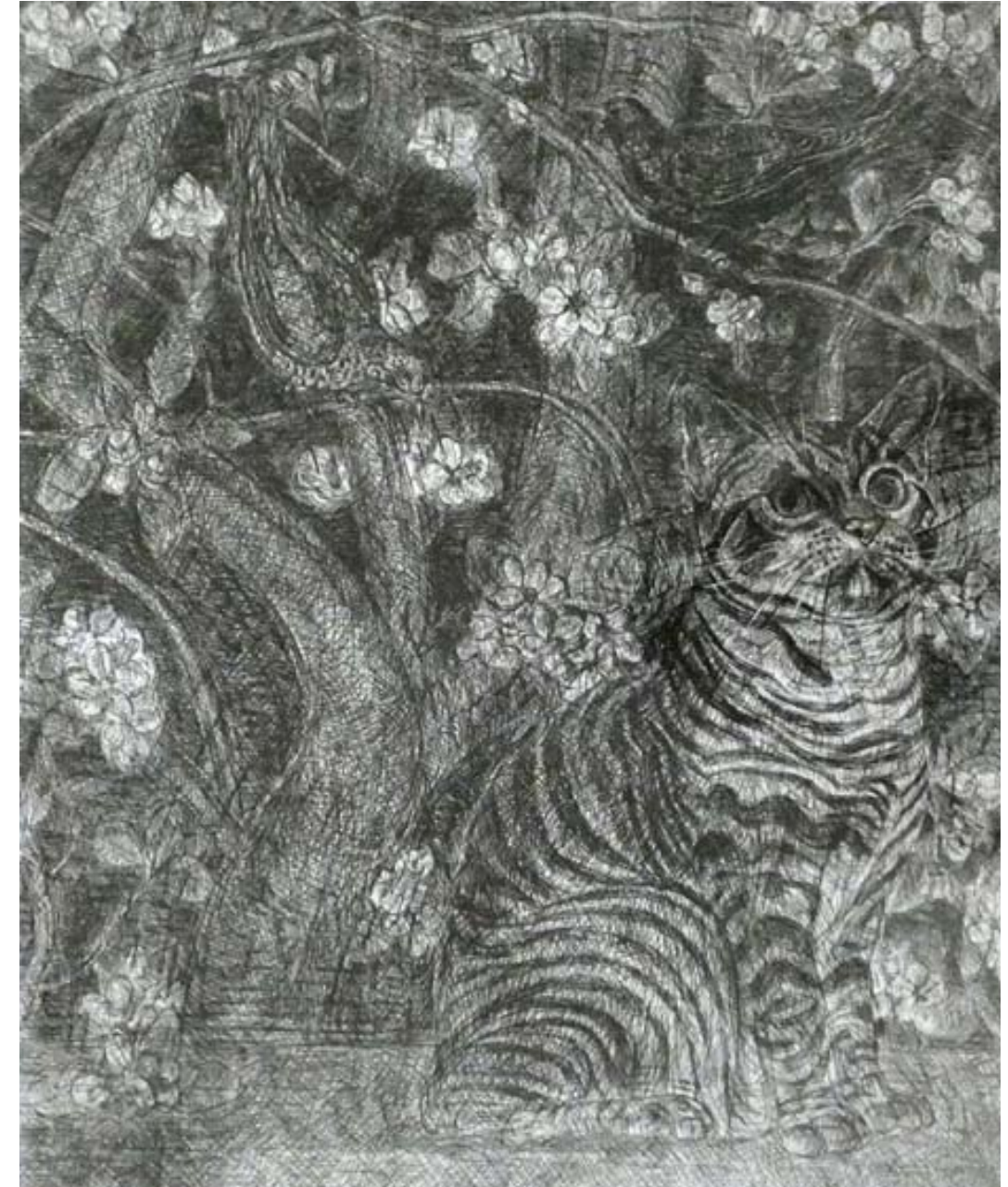
MARK & KATE ANDERSON

Collectors

Cat, Blackbird and Thrush in Blossoming Apple Tree, 2005

Etching

34 x 29 in / 86 x 74 cm (sheet size)



“Whether painting people, landscapes or still lifes, Leonard McComb approaches his work with a remarkable poeticism and intellect. His art vibrates with energy and inner life. A visit to his studio earlier this year was a moving experience, seeing his works in the context of his daily life and practice. His works need to be seen in the flesh to experience their impact and resonance. I left profoundly affected.”

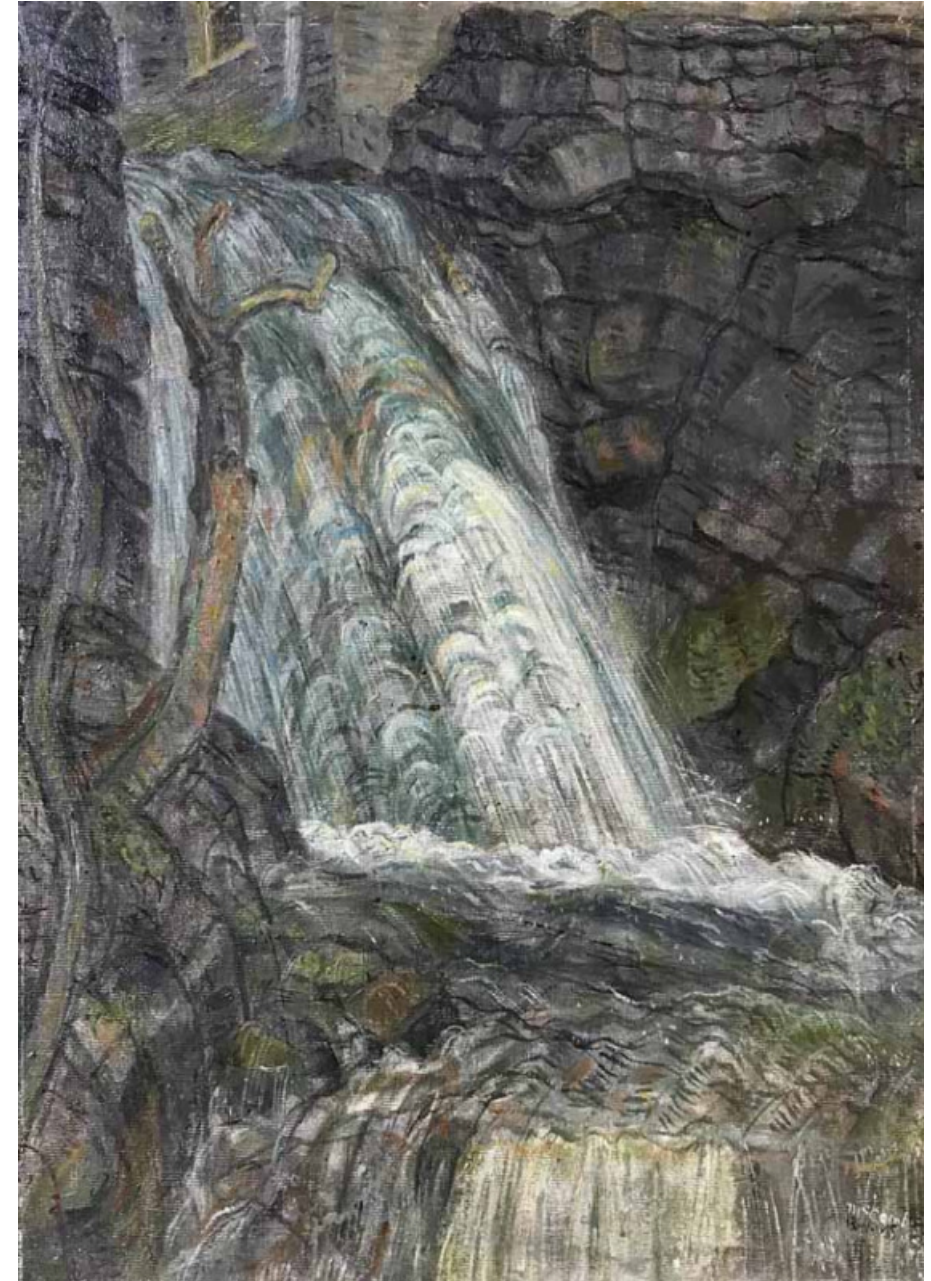
DR JOANNA MEACOCK

Curator (British Art), Glasgow Museums

Waterfall, Anglesey, Wales, 1985

Oil on canvas

17.5 x 13.5 in / 44.5 x 34.5 cm





Trawler at King's Lynn, 1999

Oil on canvas board

11.75 x 15 in / 30 x 38 cm



King's Lynn, 1999

Oil on canvas board

11.75 x 15 in / 30 x 38 cm



Sea View, 2001
 Oil on board
 12 x 16 in / 30.5 x 40.5 cm



Aubibeau Church and Village Alps Maritime, 1991
 Oil on board
 54 x 66.5 in / 137 x 169 cm

Christmas Roses, 1993
Oil on canvas
35.5 x 27.5 in / 90 x 69.5 cm



“Leonard McComb's art is both mesmerisingly precise and full of celebratory joy and a poignant empathy towards its subjects – an art at once cosmic and humane in nature.

He portrayed the ‘faces’ of flowers, fruit, people and our fellow creatures with refreshing vibrancy and pristine wonder, his pictures subtly reverberating with all the dynamic rhythms of life yet, by a miraculous Zenish paradox, their overall atmosphere is ineffably serene.

A true, luminous, in fact radically challenging art like his – ‘traditionalist’ only in the sense that he was deeply inspired by the likes of Blake and Cézanne – is one our troubled world sorely needs.”

PHILIP VANN

Author and Art Historian



Copy of Still Life by Paul Cézanne, 1988

Oil on canvas board

21.75 x 30 in / 55.5 x 74.5 cm

“It was a privilege to appreciate, from Len’s conversation, the intensity of the loving sensitivity and the instinct of celebration with which he observed the natural world, including plants, fruits and landscape.

These feelings were directly communicated by his work, in which I love both his obsession with detail and the feeling he conveys of the presence of any motif in its surrounding atmosphere and space. His pictures are alive from edge to edge, and animated by an admirable feeling for colour, sometimes very rich and sometimes of great delicacy, as well as by a beautiful quality of light. His portraits often gave a sense of the whole of the life experience of the person he was representing. His sculptures have a special quality of reverence.”

RICHARD MORPHET

Art Historian and Curator, Keeper of the Modern Collection at the Tate Gallery (1986-1998)

Two Forms, 1983

Bronze (unique)

7.75 x 8.25 x 6 in / 20 x 21 x 15 cm

Sunlight on Seawaves, 1983

Bronze (unique)

9.75 x 6.75 x 4 in / 25 x 17 x 10 cm



LEONARD McCOMB (1930-2018)

Born in Glasgow, Scotland

1954-1956	Manchester School of Art
1956-1959	Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London
1959-1960	Postgraduate in Sculpture, Slade
1990	Elected Royal Academician
1995-1998	Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools
1996	Honorary Member of the Royal Watercolour Society, the Royal Society of Painter Printmakers and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters
2004	Awarded honorary doctorate by Oxford Brookes University

McComb has taught at Oxford Brookes University; Sir John Cass School, London; Slade School of Fine Art; Royal College of Art; Goldsmiths College. In 1974 he founded the Sunningwell School of Art, Oxford.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

2018-19	<i>Leonard McComb RA: Academicians in Focus</i> , Keeper’s House, Royal Academy, London
2006	<i>Leonard McComb RA: A Retrospective</i> , Agnews, London
2004-05	<i>Leonard McComb RA</i> , Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh & Wolsey Art Gallery, Ipswich
2001	<i>Between Earth and Heaven, New Classical Movements in the Art of Today</i> Museum of Modern Art, Ostend, Belgium
2000	<i>Portraits</i> , New York Studio School Gallery, supported by the British Council

1997	<i>The Pursuit of Painting</i> , Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
1993	<i>Leonard McComb Drawings and Paintings</i> , Browse & Darby Gallery, London <i>The Sussex Scene</i> , Hove Museum and Art Gallery
1990	<i>Images of Paradise</i> , Christie's, London
1989	<i>Paintings from the South</i> , Gillian Jason Gallery, London <i>Watercolours and Drawings of the Sea</i> , RAAB Gallery, Berlin <i>56 portrait etchings of Royal Academicians and staff</i> , Friends Room Royal Academy, London
1987	<i>Viewpoint Selection of British Art</i> , Museum of Modern Art, Brussels
1986	<i>Representation Abroad</i> , Hirschhorn Museum, Washington DC
1983	<i>British Drawing Hayward Annual</i> , Hayward Gallery, London <i>Leonard McComb Drawing Painting Sculpture</i> , Arts Council Touring Exhibition organised by Museum of Modern Art, Oxford and shown at the Serpentine Gallery, London; City Art Gallery, Manchester; Gardner Arts Centre, University of Sussex and the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh
1982	<i>Representation Abroad, Drawings and Watercolours</i> , British Council, China
1980	<i>Venice Biennale; Open 80' Exhibition</i> with works by Roger Ackling, Tony Cragg, and Leonard McComb
1977	<i>British Painting</i> , Royal Academy, London <i>British Art Show</i> , Arts Council England touring exhibition
1976	<i>Human Clay</i> , Hayward Gallery, London

Almost all previous work was destroyed by the artist in 1976
Leonard McComb exhibited annually at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition

WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS:

Art Gallery Isle of Anglesey
Arts Council England
British Council
British Museum, London
University of Cambridge
Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow
Oriel Mon Museum, Wales
National Portrait Gallery, London
Tate Gallery, London
Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne
Royal Academy, London
Victoria and Albert Museum
The public art galleries of Bedford, Birmingham, Eastbourne, Leicester, Manchester, Swindon, Ulster & Worcester

MAJOR COMMISSIONS:

Ceramic and tapestry designs for Boots, Nottingham
Oil paintings on site at Bingham Canyon Copper Mines, USA for RTZ London
Commemorative portrait plaque of John Brookes (Oxford Brookes University)
Oil painting of a panoramic view of Purfleet Quay, King's Lynn, Norfolk
Jubilee Medal commissioned by the Vatican for the worldwide series of Jubilee medals to commemorate the Millennium
The Bartlett Mosaics at Westminster Cathedral, London

Portrait of Young Man Standing, 1963–83
at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 2019, now displayed at Manchester Art Gallery.
(Two further works from the edition of three are in the Tate and the Arts Council collections)

