

VAN DOREN WAXTER

Tom Fairs

In the Landscape: Hampstead and Beyond

January 5 – February 11, 2023



Untitled, c. 1970's, oil, oilstick on canvas, 30 x 36 inches (76.2 x 91.4 cm)

Van Doren Waxter is delighted to open an exhibition of five oil paintings on canvas and twelve works on paper in oil, oil stick and pastel by Tom Fairs (1925-2007), on view from January 5 – February 11, 2023 at 23 East 73rd Street. Fairs is recognized for a great range of mark-making and gesture with a quiet, skillful urgency, including a sense of structure in his compositions suffused with a sensitivity to light. The artist's training in European Post-Impressionist artists such as Pierre Bonnard influenced the all over patterning of his drawings and paintings, evident in the artist's lush, verdant works made during the last twenty years of his life. A concurrent exhibition of Hampstead Heath plein air pencil drawings by Fairs displayed alongside the gelatin silver prints of photographs by the New York artist, David Schoerner (b. 1984) will take place at Kerry Schuss Gallery from January 13-February 18, 2023.

The works to go on view at Van Doren Waxter were made in Wales, Sussex, Cornwall and his beloved Hampstead Heath in London, a large ancient open area of land encompassing forests, ponds, and meadows. In the canvases, as is the case with much of his work, Fairs continually revisits and refines related images. These paintings display Fairs' depictions of sweeping landscapes of the Welsh countryside. From a fixed point-of-view, Fairs created plein air paintings with a skewed perspective to convey the rolling green hills endemic to the region.

Fairs was married to the English novelist Elisabeth Russell Taylor (1930–2020) from 1963 to his death in 2007. In 2019, Russell Taylor shared personal details about her husband's artistic life and upbringing in a letter to the

painter Bobbie Oliver, a longtime friend of the couple. The following is an excerpt from this letter, describing his life as an artist in retirement (edited for clarity), which will be included in a special remembrance to accompany the show:

We took all our holidays to see painting and sculpture. He never felt anything but love and admiration for Bonnard. Among his favorite modern painters: Kitaj, Auerbach, Soutine—curious for working in such a different way from the way he worked and what he produced...He loved Giacometti...Tom admired anyone who was serious about drawing and painting. It didn't matter if the person doing it didn't achieve great works of art, it was the doing that mattered.

Tom Fairs was born in London, England (1925) 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 proximity to Hampstead Heath where, in his years of retirement from teaching, Fairs sketched daily. He passed away in 2007. 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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