

TRISTRAM HILLIER RA
English Surrealism

SIR HUGH CASSON ROOM FOR FRIENDS
OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

14 March 2008 – 25 June 2008

The Royal Academy of Arts presents an exhibition of works by Royal Academician, Tristram Hillier. The exhibition will display a wide range of work from the 1920s to the early 1980s providing a rare opportunity to see examples of Hillier's paintings and preliminary drawings. It coincides with the publication of *Painter Pilgrim - The Art and Life of Tristram Hillier* by Jenny Pery, the first biography of the artist. This extensively illustrated volume reproduces many of his most important works and re-establishes Hillier as one of the most significant English painters of his time.

In the art of Tristram Hillier, 20th century English Surrealism is seen at its elegantly restrained best. Hillier's highly individual imagery, based on meticulous observation of the outside world, is layered with many different meanings, each painting becoming a visual parable. Although the mood in his work may range from lively humour to brittle melancholia, the message is rarely one of comfort. His immaculately painted pictures present a dreamlike, post-apocalyptic world where it seems forever winter.

Born in Beijing in 1905, Hillier was educated at Downside School, where he first professed an interest in drawing. The disciplines and iconography of the Catholic faith, instilled in him during those early years, were to have a major influence on his work. The Slade School of Art sharpened Hillier's natural ability as a draughtsman, and throughout his life he maintained a rigorous approach to drawing. Hillier moved to France in the late 1920s, where he immersed himself in the Paris art scene, becoming close friends with Georges Braque, Max Ernst and André Masson.

Membership of Paul Nash's Unit One Group brought Hillier into contact with the English Surrealists, particularly Edward Wadsworth, with whom he drew and painted around the coast of Normandy. His close links with the Surrealist Movement both in this country and abroad, as well as his deep admiration for the early Italian and Flemish masters, were to set Hillier's artistic direction. After the war he settled with his family in Somerset, where he worked in artistic isolation until his death in 1983. Hillier's classical, timeless images, full of steely light and ominous shadows, have a unique place in the history of modern art. Hillier was elected as a painter RA in April 1957 and became senior RA in 1981.

The majority of works in the exhibition will be available for sale.

PUBLICATION

Painter Pilgrim - The Art and Life of Tristram Hillier by Jenny Pery.

Published by the Royal Academy of Arts 2008

Available from 04 April at the RA Shop £25

DATES AND OPENING HOURS

Exhibition dates: 14 March 2008 – 25 June 2008

Public Access: The RA Friends Room is open to the public from 4–6pm daily.

Late night opening: Fridays until 10pm

Admission Free

IMAGES

Publicity images for Tristram Hillier RA can be obtained from Picselect, the Press Association's image service for press use. Please register at www.papicselect.com and, once registered, go to the Royal Academy folder in the Arts section of Picselect.

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