



ANTIQUES TRADE gazette

THE ART MARKET WEEKLY

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Dealer portal takes over 70-year-old Chelsea fair

by Laura Chesters

Chelsea Antiques Fair is to return later this year under the ownership of an online dealing platform.

Caroline Penman, who has run the venerable event at the Chelsea Old Town Hall since the early 1980s, had recently been looking to sell the event.

She has now agreed a deal for an undisclosed fee with 2Covet.com founders Steve Sly, Charles Wallrock (both dealers) and marketing specialist Zara Rowe.

While coronavirus restrictions remain in place there is no confirmed date for the first fair. However, an event in autumn this year is planned.

'Return to former glory'

Sly, Wallrock and Rowe created 2Covet.com in 2019 as a platform for dealers to sell online.

Sly said: "With the continued threat of Covid on our minds we strongly feel the market will relish smaller boutique events such as the historic *Chelsea Antiques Fair*. It is a time to return the fair to its former glory years."

The fair would normally run in March but last year's edition was cancelled due to the virus.

The autumn event will host around 30 dealers, initially inviting 2Covet members and former Chelsea exhibitors, across a seven-day event.

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Caroline Lay (pictured below), art sale manager at David Lay, is the great-great niece of Ella Naper who sat for this painting by Laura Knight. It sold for **£105,000** in Penzance on January 28.

So what am I bid for my great-great aunt?

Pick of the week

A nude study by Dame Laura Knight (1877-1970) found plenty of admirers when it appeared at the latest fine art sale held by Penzance saleroom David Lay (18% buyer's premium).

Dating from c.1913, it depicts Ella Naper – the same sitter who appears in the artist's most famous painting *Self-portrait with nude* which dates from around the same

time and is now in the National Portrait Gallery.

The auctioneer on the rostrum on January 28 was her great-great niece Caroline Lay, who is art sale manager at the auction house.

The catalogue entry suggested this was an 'early study of Ella Naper that led to Knight's most celebrated work'.

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Lamb takes a bucolic view of life

Exhibition shows how the artist returned from the First World War in a mellowed mood

by Gabriel Berner

Before the First World War, Australian-born British painter Henry Lamb (1883-1960) had been a bohemian, living a typically footloose existence in Paris and London.

But the conflict changed the trajectory of Lamb's career. Serving in the British Army as a doctor-soldier, he was gassed in 1918 and returned home a more subdued artist.

What followed is the focus of *In Arcadia*, a new exhibition at Messums Wiltshire which runs until March 13.

Providing the nucleus is a small group of mid-career paintings and drawings from the artist's estate, created after he moved to the quiet Wiltshire village of Coombe Bissett in 1928, newly remarried and an impending father.

These rustic subjects – skinny-dipping in rivers, still-lives and flower picking in the bucolic landscapes around Salisbury, among others – were painted up to the aftermath of the Second World War.

"We are delighted to be shedding light on an often overlooked period of Lamb's life," says the gallery's Johnny Messum. "Many of the paintings haven't been shown since Lamb's lifetime and so gives a rare insight into an extraordinary period of painting."

Commercial interest tends to focus on the two decades prior to Lamb's arrival in Wiltshire as a founding member of both the Camden Town Group and the London Group, and his association with the Bloomsbury Set.

His famous elongated portrait of the writer and biographer Lytton Strachey, now in the Tate, was painted in 1914, while his portrait of model Edie McNeill, from 1909, sold at Christie's in 2017 for an auction record £230,000.

However, what followed in Wiltshire was "to be no less productive, no less brilliant," writes art historian David Boyd Haycock in the show's catalogue.

Star work

The exhibition's star work is a double portrait of the artist and his second wife, Lady Pansy Pakenham, standing in their garden two years after moving to Coombe Bissett.



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1. *The Artist and his Wife*, 1930 – £88,500 by Henry Lamb.
2. *Bathers* – £68,500.
3. *Girl with Rose*, 1943 – £19,850.

"I become more & more hermetical and would like to hear the good news that I need never again leave this house," wrote Lamb of their beloved home Brookside, where he would remain until his death.

The grand oil, measuring 3ft 6in x 3ft 8in (1.07 x 1.12m), is a playful take

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We are delighted to be shedding light on an often overlooked period of Lamb's life

on Thomas Gainsborough's famous work, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, which had been 'rediscovered' only three years before Lamb's portrait.

Boyd Haycock observes that Lamb and his wife "are the relaxed and confident masters of all they survey... [Lamb's] gaze and stance (albeit without the hunting musket) almost precisely mimic that of *Mr Andrews*."

The artist frequently painted his family and friends in between portrait commissions that took him to estates and university towns across the country.

Lamb's daughter Felicia said: "As we grew older, we were often called to sit for portraits – he never stopped working, and even when he had commissioned pictures on the go, he would simultaneously be painting a local scene, or a portrait of a neighbour, friend, or failing that, one of us.

"We were not always as obliging as our mother and had to be bribed – 6d an hour was the rate, hard earned as we had to sit still for long mornings and usually complained that the finished result was unflattering."

Henrietta, Lamb's eldest daughter,

featured prominently in his work. Bookish and artistically talented, she sat for her father numerous times throughout her childhood and into adulthood. A small full-length portrait of Henrietta, seen on the cusp of adulthood wearing a white dress and holding a rose, features in the exhibition under the title *Girl with Rose*.

Another family portrait, *The Infant*, was painted following the birth of Felicia in 1933 and shows a Madonna-like Pansy holding the baby as she reaches towards a basin of water.

As well as family portraits, bathing was another constant theme for Lamb in the decade following his move to the country. *Bathers*, an oil painting of a group of nude women and a child in the River Ebble which bordered the Lambs' garden, provides an English twist on a scene apparently inspired by the dream-like pastoral works of Puvis de Chavannes and French Neo-Symbolism of the late 19th century.

A separate component of the exhibition is devoted to portrait drawings Lamb completed in Brittany and Ireland before the First World War.

Drawn in pencil, these early pictures are priced in the low four figures and include a selection of sketches done on the front line such as those for his painting *Advance Dressing Station on the Struma 1916*, which hangs in Manchester City Art Gallery. ■

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