

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

CECIL KENNEDY

Leyton 1905 - 1997 St Albans

Ref: CB 233

A summer group



Signed lower right: *Cecil Kennedy*

Oil on canvas: 30 x 25 in / 76.2 x 63.5 cm

Frame size: 36 5/8 x 32 in / 93 x 81.3 cm

Painted *circa* 1952

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Provenance:

Frost & Reed, London [527685];
private collection, acquired from the above, then by descent

Exhibited:

London, Royal Academy of Arts, *Summer Exhibition*, 3rd May-24th August 1952, no.335

Cecil Kennedy will be best remembered for his minutely detailed depictions of flowers, though he also worked as a portraitist. His greatest works are admired for their exquisite detail and artful compositions, and many of these were produced during the 1960s. His wife Winifred created the brilliant flower arrangements, usually in a vase from their collection of mid-eighteenth century Waterford vases, which continually inspired his work.

Kennedy was born into a large artistic Victorian family. He was the youngest of thirteen children. His grandfather was an artist who had lived in France, sketched with Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875) and exchanged drawings with him. His father was a landscape painter and four of his brothers were artists. His brother Charles, who died in the 'flu epidemic of 1918, was a particular influence on him. In the early thirties he met and married Winifred Aves. She became his inspiration and for sixty-four years they worked together as a creative team.

In the Second World War he was called up and fought in the British Army in Europe. He was in Antwerp during the winter of 1944 where he sought out and befriended Flemish painters. It was a time for reflection and studying Flemish and Dutch still life paintings in their natural setting brought about a definite change in his painting style. He maintained contact with Flemish artists up to his death. Cecil Kennedy had many important patrons. Queen Mary bought his work, as did the Duke of Windsor and the Astors. Queen Mary is quoted as saying "When I see Cecil Kennedy's pictures I can smell the flowers and hear the hum of the bees." She noticed he had painted a ladybird on a flower stem. Thereafter all his paintings contained a ladybird. Lord Thompson of Fleet, a friend and patron, wrote about him and commented that "his pictures conveyed a joy of life and artistic creativity."

Kennedy had an important exhibiting career, showing before the age of twenty four at both the Royal Scottish Academy and the Royal Hibernian Academy, regularly at the Royal Academy and in the provinces. From the 1950s until the 1970s, he exhibited regularly with the Fine Art Society, who were keen advocates of his work. He was awarded a silver medal at the Paris Salon in 1956, and a gold medal in 1970. He was celebrated in a retrospective of contemporary flower painting, *Three Flower Painters*, held at the Richard Green Gallery in 1997. Mr Green was one of several art dealers to champion Kennedy's unsurpassed eminence in the genre of flower painting, blending botanical accuracy and sensual effects.

Kennedy's artful juxtapositions of modern exotic hybrids, blooms and humble favourites like field grasses, as well as the plant species celebrated in the works of the Old Masters revealed his knowledge as a plantsman as well as an artist. While studying in the great national collections of the major artistic centres, London, Paris, Antwerp and Zurich, he fell under the influence of the Old Masters, from whom he derived his meticulous technique. The novelty of his all white

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arrangements reflected an awareness of twentieth century horticultural innovations such as Vita Sackville-West's 'white garden.'

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