

RICHARD GREEN

WILLIAM SCOTT CBE RA

Greenock 1913 - 1989 Somerset

Ref: CD 121

Three Forms on Blue



Studio stamp lower right

Gouache: 11 x 11 in / 27.9 x 27.9 cm

Frame size: 19 ½ x 18 ½ in / 49.5 x 47 cm

Executed in 1971

This work is registered in the William Scott Archive as number 1632



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Provenance:

The artist, and then by descent
Coram Gallery, London
Private collection
Beaux Arts, London;
private collection, acquired from the above in 1998

Exhibited:

London, Coram Gallery, *William Scott: Works on Paper*, July-August 1995, no catalogue
London, Beaux Arts, *Terry Frost, Barbara Hepworth, Patrick Heron, Roger Hilton, Peter Lanyon, William Scott*, 4th-28th February 1998, not numbered, illus. in colour

William Scott's devotion to still life and its stark, dramatic representation had autobiographical as well as aesthetic significance: 'The forms I use are the forms I see about me and the forms I have dreamt about since I was a child.'¹ Scott's *Three Forms on Blue* is a mature, minimalist gouache whose objects are abstracted into succinct silhouettes hovering weightlessly against a bold, dynamic ground. While Scott remained devoted to the representation of still life subject matter throughout his career, his paintings from 1969 onwards drastically departed from his earlier investigation of the genre. The setting disappeared along with the table-top; the individual domestic objects were reduced to flat symbolic forms. The pictures were increasingly referred to as compositions rather than still lifes in this second phase of abstraction, each an ordered variation on a new restricted theme or tonal contrast. This superb gouache in stunning cerulean blue, is a perfect example of the richness and complexity of colour and composition achieved with Scott's new minimalist vocabulary.

Each form is perfectly placed, described with economy without being severe and set against the rich, captivating colour-field. Norbert Lynton referred to the reductive and yet harmonious purity of this series of still lifes as 'neo-classical', expressing a kind of musicality in the distribution of 'a few notes cleanly struck, at finely judged intervals...As in the best Neoclassical painting and sculpture, purity is revealed as refined sensuality, austerity as an acute form of luxury.'² Lynton returns to Scott's Neoclassical period, describing it as 'a conscious return to basics that is belied by the sheer beauty of many of the examples...It is not only the frying pans and the pots that are honed down into the succinctest possible emblems: the paintings themselves are strictly focussed – and thus they draw attention to other, more delicate ambiguities that now became WS's concern and delight.'³

In the early 1970s, retrospective exhibitions of Scott's important and illustrious career were held at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh in 1971 and at the Tate Gallery, London in 1972.

¹ The artist cited in Lawrence Alloway (ed.), *Nine Abstract Artists, their Work and Theory*, Alec Tiranti, London 1954, p.37.

² Norbert Lynton, *William Scott*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2004, p.317.

³ *Ibid.*, p.312.

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