HOWGEGO
HISTORIC + MODERN

Rock form in a landscape

Sold

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REF: 10869

Height: 29.2 cm (11.5")

Width: 23.8 cm (9.4")

Description

Signed and indistinctly dated 'Sutherland 1943' (upper left), numbered '41' (lower right)
Black ink, pastel and watercolour

From late-1940 Sutherland, the leading progressive British painter, was working under the terms of a series of six-month contracts issued by the Ministry of Information to depict the events and experiences of the war. Sutherland remarked in February 1941 'Nearly everyone says that the war has been a "good thing for me" as my war pictures are "so much more understandable" than my landscapes. It's hard to convince people that the degree of abstraction, if you can call it that, is identical!'

His independent landscapes from this time need to be considered in the context of his work as a war artist. 'At the beginning of the war the forms of destruction moved me tremendously. After that I began to feel drawn towards basic industries such as furnaces, mines and latterly quarries. These things seemed to symbolise a kind of eternal war; a constant of conflict between the forces of man and nature, intensified greatly during a war between nations, and in which a man can only just emerge on top. The turning of iron ore into steel seemed so much a primitive combat (still, in spite of modern machinery, an elemental and almost crude process, with the floor of the teeming pit like some tremendous field.) So too with the mines, quarries, perpetual conflict with intractable material. The sensation of conflict, therefore, was what I had to unload in pictorial terms. '

The experience of war enriched Sutherland and one is immediately aware of a greater toughness and boldness in his independent landscapes from this period. His use of colour during this period becomes more strident and the application more fluid and uninhibited, as he exploited surface and texture.

'Sutherland widened the scope of his art and modified his style. He responded emotionally to what was happening at the time and this stimulated his pictorial invention, a journey through darkness, a descent into the inferno.'

There is a complete metamorphis and this picture is a powerful example of Sutherland at his best, with form reaching a peak of tension, a quintessence in which everything is concentrated and expressed.

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