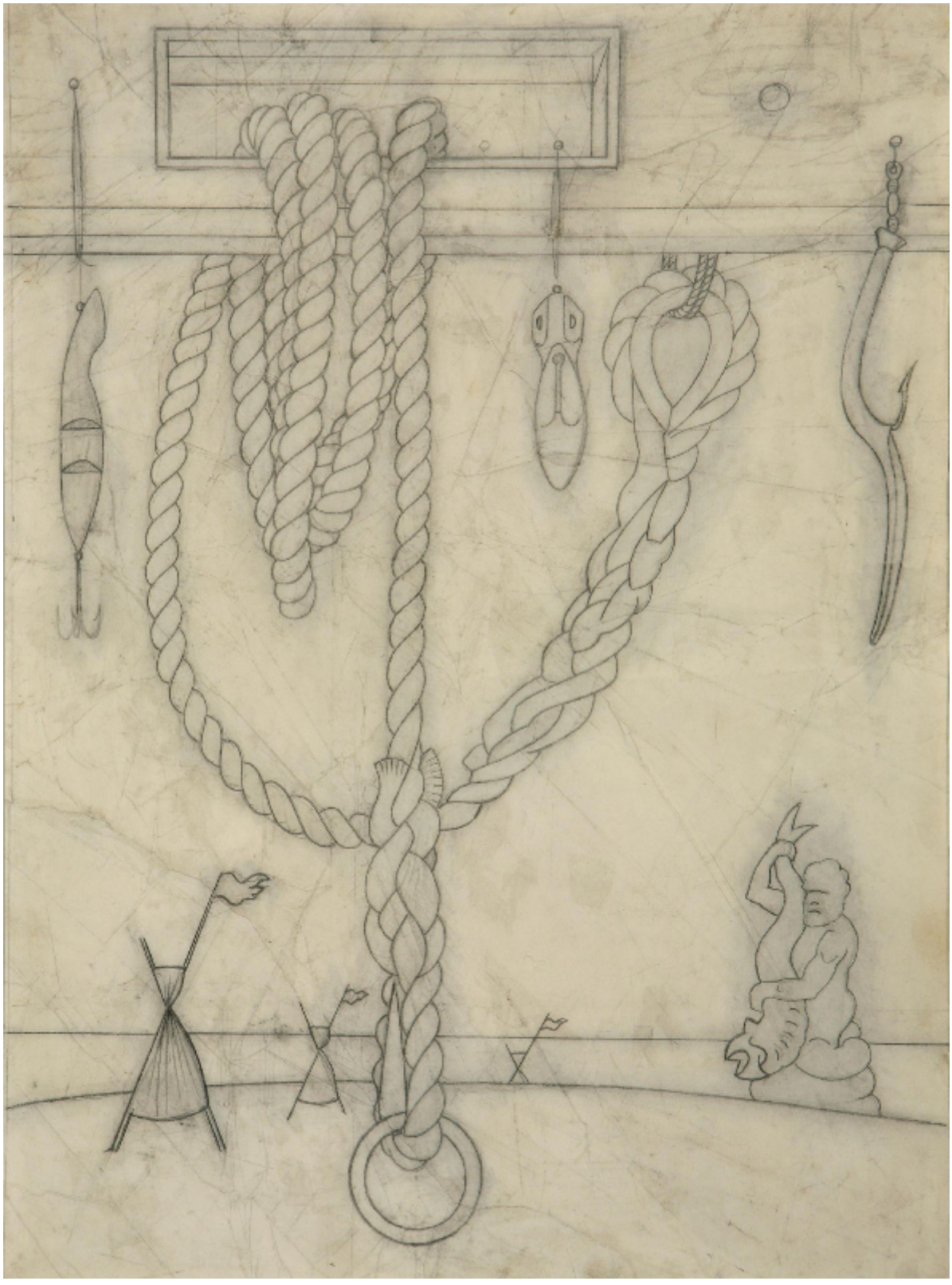
Study for Vespertino, 1937

Edward Wadsworth

Sold



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REF: 10735

Height: 51.5 cm (20.3")

Width: 37.5 cm (14.8")

Description

EDWARD WADSWORTH (British,1889-1949)
Study for Vespertino
Pencil
Executed c.1937

LITERATURE : Edward Wadsworth: Complete Painting & Drawings (Jonathan Black), No 345

The present pencil drawing is a detailed study which appears almost exactly the same in size and composition. Study for Vespertino draws on the artist's own collection of marine objects to create a typically surreal image, the rope hanging down from the letterbox displaying an air of weightlessness and illusion. This is typical of a still-life of this period.

Sheet height 51.5 cm, 20 ¼ in. Length 37.5 cm. , 14 ¾ in
In an English, pine, rope-twist, part gesso washed & gilded frame
Frame Height 67 cm., 2ft., ½ in., Length 53 cm., 1ft., 9 in.

Another tempera The Beached Margin of the same year, also has the collection of disparate nautical objects suspended together, and the disconcerting play with perspective and distance.

The Beached Margin, 1937 (Tate Collection)

The same compositional device also occurs in both - that of the tall sky, with a low sea horizon and slightly mounded beach below it, giving a feeling of thrust. The collection of marine artefacts was a long standing subject for Wadsworth, an earlier example being Regalia, 1928.

Regalia, 1928 (Tate Collection)

Richard Cork says of a fourth of these still-lifes: 'The English Channel seems calm enough, but after a while the stillness begins to ache with expectancy'. This sense of taut energy is very present in Study for Vespertino, and relates to Wadsworth's sense of the need for 'guts or vivacity or intoxication' and 'strength' in art.

At the lower left of Study for Vespertino is a figure probably of the Greek god of the sea and of fishermen, Glaucus, a mortal who ate magic herbs and was turned into a god in half human, half fish form. This reference reflects Wadsworth's sense of the status of mariners and their paraphernalia - here in Study for Vespertino he imbues the everyday objects depicted with a sense of significance and mystery; and in Regalia the composition is reminiscent of a classical trophy, and the title itself makes explicit the reference to a sceptre, orb and chain.

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In the 1930s Wadsworth was living with his family at Dairy Farm (later Dairy House), Maresfield, Sussex. His studio there remained the disciplined centre of his professional life, as well as being the setting for a wide circle of friends, including Paul Nash, Arthur Bliss, Henry Moore and Dick Wyndham.

Neville Wallis, in his Observer review of the 1951 Wadsworth Memorial exhibition at the Tate wrote of these depictions of grouped objects:

Wadsworth's fragments, in their power to liberate the imagination are rather akin to poetry: the poetry... of an independent and strangely gifted artist.

In the absence of the finished tempera work, Study for Vespertino stands as an important work in the history of Wadsworth's art.

EDWARD WADSWORTH (1889-1949)

Wadsworth played a leading role in the early-20th century revival of tempera painting, alongside Giorgio de Chirico and Gino Severi...

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