# Variations on a Theme - Jan 27 No.3/Untitled

Keith Vaughan

Sold

Howgego Historic & Modern
07974 149 912
lucy@howgegohistoricandmodern.com howgegohistoricandmodern.com

REF: 10933

Height: 44 cm (17.3")

Width: 32.5 cm (12.8")

Description

Initialled and dated 'KV/Jan 27' (lower left)
Numbered 'no.3' verso
Oil pastel on paper
Executed in 1960

Leicestershire Education Authority within the County Council collection.
Acquired in 1963 it formed part of the County Council's Schools Art Loan Scheme and has been displayed in a school until it was returned to storage in July 2000.

RELATED WORKS : This oil pastel is one of a series which Vaughan created in early 1960, two other examples of which are in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Centro de Arte Moderna in Lisbon.

Sheet height 43 cm., 16 ¾ in., Length 32 cm., 13 in., In an ebonised moulded frame.
Frame Height 67 cm., 26 ½ in. Length 54 cm., 21 ½ in.

In 1960 Vaughan was living in London, having returned from a long working trip to the USA the previous year. It was during his time as Resident Painter at the Iowa State University that he discovered oil pastels and was excited by the spontaneity of expression they enabled, and by their richness of colour. They were novel in England, and he described them to Prunella Clough: 'waterproof, impervious to everything, can be rolled, stamped on, eaten' (see M. Yorke, Keith Vaughan his Life and Work, London, 1990, p. 189). He included a suite of his oil pastels in the major retrospective of his work at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1962, and would continue to use pastels for the rest of his life.

Vaughan was living in the Hampstead flat where he had been since 1942, and where he would remain until his death in 1977. He returned from America to a position at the Slade, and in February 1960 he had an important show of early and current with the Matthieson Gallery. This was well received, with the art critic Benedict Nicolson writing in the Observer:

His latest canvases (they are his best) show how suddenly he has gained in confidence, how all those conscientious years of worrying like Cezanne over patches of paint have stood him in marvellous stead.

' He has learnt his trade the hard way, and now he can brush nudes on to large canvases, leaving them "unfinished" flat areas, almost, of uniform colour - yet so rigorous has been his self-imposed training, that none of their strength, none of their monumentality is lost in the broadness of their handling; no structure is lost in the free rhythm' (Observer, February 28 1960, p22)

Vaughan was 48 years old, and was already an established figure, with work in the Tate, the Art Institute of Chicago, the City Galleries of Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Nottingham and Wakefield, and the National Gallery of New South Wales, among others. He was also elected an associate of the Royal Academy in 1960, though he resigned within a month.

In the late 50s and early 60s Vaughan's work was entering a period of greater variety of surface texture, and it was also becoming more abstract. His work often consisted of figures in a landscape, until this point traditionally composed with the bodies drawn with greater realism than their more abstracted background.



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Around this time however he was working on resolving the space between the foreground figures and their surroundings, and moving towards consolidating the whole image in...



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