

CONNAUGHT BROWN

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Emil Nolde & Herbert Beck

2nd – 7th June, 2014



Emil Nolde, *Tulpen* c. 1940, watercolour on Japan paper, 35.5 x 47.2 cm

This exhibition will explore the artistic relationship between Herbert Beck (1920 – 2010) and his mentor Emil Nolde (1867 – 1956), featuring 10 important watercolours by Nolde made between 1908 and 1952, alongside 12 works by Beck. Through landscapes, figurative works and still lifes the show will examine how Beck learnt from Nolde's work the importance of working "from within" and to use the expressive potential of watercolour to create mystical paintings filled with colour, freedom and space.

From 1906 to 1907 Nolde was a member of the Die Brücke group, but he soon left to develop his own highly individual Expressionist style. He used bold colours applied in a 'wet-in-wet' technique to create emotionally-powered, visionary paintings. Declared a 'degenerate' artist by the Nazis, who forbade him to paint in 1941, he continued to make watercolours in secret. He called these important works his

“unpainted pictures”, several of which will be displayed in this show, such as *Seltsames Paar und Figur im Hintergrund* and *Akte, Mann und Frau (Frau Hände vor der Brust gekreuzt)*.

In 1952 Nolde first introduced himself to Beck, at an exhibition of the younger artist's paintings at Galerie Commeter in Hamburg. Commeter had not only been the first gallery in Hamburg to show Nolde but also the Brücke artists and Edvard Munch. Beck recalls that this meeting was a “key moment” for him: “As a young painter, I met Emil Nolde in the Commeter Galerie, Hamburg. The richness of his colours, particularly evident in his watercolours, fascinated me”.

Initially, Beck applied Nolde's expressionist style to his oil paintings. However, following a serious illness in 1984 (brought on by over-exposure to turpentine) he too began to work in watercolour. Adopting Nolde's watery technique, he applied the paint to thick handmade paper and allowed the boundaries between the colours to spread. Most significantly however, Nolde taught Beck to give freedom to his inner expression, imparting upon him his belief that “every colour holds within it a soul”. Beck developed further numerous theories on watercolour's ability to provoke emotional responses in the viewer, evident in his “meditative landscapes” and organic compositions.

Transcending time and space, these luminescent watercolours envelop the viewer, demonstrating the unique shared vision of Nolde and Beck.

This is the second exhibition of watercolours by Herbert Beck at Connaught Brown, following on from *Herbert Beck: Works on Paper* in 2012.

For more information and images please contact Ruth Millington at art@connaughtbrown.co.uk