

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



PETER LANYON

1918 St. Ives (Cornwall) - Taunton 1964

Cornish Tin Mine

Charcoal, watercolour and gouache on paper.

Bearing the stamp of the Lanyon estate lower left: *Lanyon*. Executed in the late 1950s.

330 x 242 mm

PROVENANCE: Sheila Lanyon – The Ives Collection (acquired from Sheila Lanyon circa May 1974) – Anonymous sale, British Art on Paper, Christie's, London, 28 November 2000, lot 185 – Spink-Leger, London – Private collection, Europe

Peter Lanyon [Fig. 1] was a Cornish painter of landscapes leaning heavily towards abstraction. He was one of the most important artists to emerge in post-war Britain. Despite his early death at the age of forty-six after injuries sustained in a gliding accident he achieved a body of work that is among the most original and important reappraisals of modernism in painting to be found anywhere. Combining abstract values with radical ideas about landscape and the figure, Lanyon navigated a course from Constructivism through Abstract Expressionism to a style close to Pop. He also made constructions, pottery and collage. He saw himself as painting in the English landscape tradition set by artists he admired, among them JMW Turner. He was initially influenced by the St Ives school of artists, including Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, who were drawn to the fishing village by the dazzling light and the cheap rents. However, when Lanyon returned to St Ives after active service in the Second World War, he fell out with most of the other artists. As the only native Cornishman among them, he saw them as incomers who did not share his interest in getting under the skin of the landscape – which he attempted literally, scrambling down mine shafts as well as soaring above them for a bird's eye view. To hone his knowledge of the Cornish coastal landscape he trained to be a glider pilot, and in the last five years of his life went on to clock up hundreds of flying hours, using his experience of gliding as the basis for many of his paintings.

In September 2010 Lanyon's work was honoured with a large-scale retrospective exhibition at Tate St Ives. Curated by Chris Stephens, Head of Displays and Curator of Modern British Art at Tate Britain, it was the first thorough museum retrospective for almost forty years. In 2015, a group of fifteen of Lanyon's remarkable 'gliding paintings' were brought together for an exhibition at the Courtauld Gallery titled 'Soaring Flight'.

Cornish Tin Mine was executed towards the end of the 1950s. A sense of Cornwall is central to its meaning – Lanyon was a Cornishman and that cultural identity, and the history of Cornwall and its tin mining industry were central aspects of his persona and his art. The structure on the right is almost certainly part of a headframe set over a shaft at one of the coastal mines in Penwith. The gouache seems like a fairly straightforward landscape, but for the marks in the vivid blue, perhaps representing currents in the water, or the air.

We would like to thank Toby Treves for his help in cataloguing this work.

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Fig. 1: Ida Kar (1908 Tambov, Russia – London 1974), *Portrait of Peter Lanyon*, 1961, photograph.
National Portrait Gallery, London (inv. NPG x127279)