



*Going for a swim*



*Tending the flock*



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## THE STUDIO OF TOM CARR

## *Forward by Eamonn Mallie*

Nothing excites me more as a collector and critic than to get an opportunity to see a body of work from an artist's studio.

I have seen few studio collections coming on to the open market over thirty years. As Tom Carr's biographer it gives me great pleasure to be invited to do an assessment of the residue of Tom's studio.

Having carefully viewed and examined hundreds of his drawings in the course of the last week I felt I was dealing with no earthly estate. Carr as a student at Slade School of Fine Art in London spent two years in 'the Life Room' under the watchful eye of Professor Henry Tonks himself a very competent painter. This Life Room discipline stood Tom in good stead as we witness in the essence of his early and late works.

I doubt if Carr lacked innate talent as a draftsman, he could have achieved the standards he achieved. Last week a small pencil and wash beach scene by William Orpen sold for £140000 in a Sotheby's auction. It was an exquisite drawing but frankly it had nothing on the best of Carr's drawings in this exhibition.

Carr was a master in whatever medium he chose but especially when it came to letting a pencil do the work for him. In this atelier collection we encounter dozens of beautiful drawings of little girls, his three daughters habitually ready subject for Carr's restless pencil. I doubt it is an accident that the South Belfast artist portrays the female with absolute insouciance. One has to be mindful that Tom lived for most of his life with his wife, three daughters and grandchildren around him.

He once told me he painted every day of the year including Christmas day. Carr didn't recourse to a bag of tricks to realize his vision. He was fundamentally a figurative artist who year after year and decade after decade stayed faithful to his métier of making paintings. He flirted in the Thirties with 'Objective Abstraction' while in London but found himself cheating, dropping in a chair or an object. He always felt the need for a figure to anchor his work.

Though trained by Tonks, a pioneer plastic surgeon in the First World War and a stickler for forensic drawing in pinning down a figure on a surface Tom soon gravitated towards the mannerisms of Walter Sickert electing to remain mindful of the completeness of the environs in which he placed his centerpiece, sitter, still life or whatever.

This exhibition is a celebration of Tom Carr's children and his wife Stella. Sadly only one daughter Jemima is alive today. Tom spent inestimable hours observing, studying and capturing his family's every gesture, sometimes Stella breast feeding, playing cards, reading a newspaper and at other times the three girls Ann, Veronica and Jemima (Jemma) playing, drawing or eating at the tea table. This practice was all consuming for Carr. At heart Tom Carr was an outdoor man. He loved the Mourne and Newcastle beach, and he loved walking along the River Lagan with Bert his dog or some other Bert before my getting to know him. Carr had a great propensity for painting snow in Barnett Demesne dropping in a blackbird by way of contrast to the whiteness of the snow or observing Bert sniffing visible patches of grass...

While my predilection today is for Carr's early oil paintings he held to the view that he turned a page in Watercolour on the island of Ireland. He was proud of the fact that he lifted the Watercolor on to a uniquely larger scale. The late TP Flanagan acted accordingly.

We should be thankful to Tom's grandson James and other family members for affording us as collectors this opportunity to not just see but possibly procure some of these Carr gems.

It is fitting that the Carr family chose to hang these works in the James Wray Gallery. Tom and his daughters would be pleased that the works are adorning the walls of a gallery which likes to celebrate any and all manifestations of beauty.

*Eamonn Mallie 29 May 2014*



*At the farmyard*

## *You are invited to a preview of* **WATER COLOUR'S AND DRAWINGS**

From the studio of

Tom Carr HRHA HRUA ARWS (1909-1999)

on Thursday 12th June 2014 6.00 - 8.00pm

(continuing to 21st June 2014)

Exhibition to be opened by Mr. Eamonn Mallie

Prices from £30.00