

OSBORNE SAMUEL

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

PETER KINLEY (1926-1988)



No 1 Red White + Black, c.1958

Oil on Canvas

64 x 70 cms

(25.15 x 27.51 in)

P.O.A.

Signed & titled verso

By the late 1950s, when Kinley painted Red, White and Black and other pared down palette-knifed abstractions of landscape with subliminal suggestions of the human figure, the Vienna-born, St. Martin's-trained painter had already enjoyed two solo exhibitions at Gimpel Fils,

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London. The connection with Gimpels continued well into the 1960s and was followed with other landmark solo exhibitions with Arthur Tooth in London and with Paul Rosenberg in New York.

Despite the pronounced effect on his work of the hugely influential Russian-born French painter Nicolas de Stael, described by the art critic Marco Livingstone as, a godsend to Kinley, the young British painter apparently, trod a solitary path that has made him difficult to place in the pantheon of Modern British art. The individuality of his approach to form and colour was plastic rather than descriptive and rested on the emphatic physicality of his paint handling. Nevertheless Kinley, whether in the impastoed de Stael-influenced early manner, or the thinly scribbled Matisse-inspired later colour field work, retained simplified, minimal and icon-like central motifs.

A clue to, and symptom of, the plasticity of Kinley's approach is in the picture titles themselves – Landscape or Seascape for example – that in Livingstone's estimation confirms the artist's intention to, treat such time worn subjects generically. Shortly after, however, and with the brightly coloured Abstract Composition (1956) and then with Red, White and Black in the present case, Kinley uses titles without reference to landscape or other natural, external subjects. Red, White and Black does, however, suggest a landscape with the palette-knifed band of cream and red paint slabs across the middle of a near-black 'ground'.

By the late 1950s, and early 1960s, Kinley turned to the classic motif of the upright figure against anonymous interior or suggested landscape backdrops. One of these totem like figures, now re-orientated into a reclining posture, could conceivably be a residual or secondary feature of the landscape band in Red, White and Black.

A medium size work produced during Kinley's decade teaching at St. Martin's School of Art (a distinguished teaching career at Wimbledon and Corsham would follow) Red, White and Black shows how far Kinley pursued an abstract painterly dimension without fully abandoning external references.

P.D.

1 Peter Kinley Marco Livingstone and Catherine Kinley, p10 Lund Humphries 2010

2 ibid, p9

3 ibid, p10