

# OSBORNE SAMUEL

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

## JOHN MINTON (1917-1957)



**London, 1941**

Oil on panel  
25.4 x 40.1 cms  
(9.98 x 15.76 in)  
P.O.A.

Signed, dated & inscribed 'for Peter' lower right

Provenance:

The Artist, who gifted to Peter Mackenzie-Young  
Thence by family descent  
Osborne Samuel, London

In Paris, in 1939, John Minton eagerly tracked down the Russian painter Eugene Berman (1899-1972), whose work he and his fellow student, Michael Ayrton, had encountered in James Thrall Soby's *After Picasso*. The result, as Minton ruefully admitted, verged on the obsessional. As he immersed himself in Berman's moonlit squares, strewn with shattered columns and often charged by an intense blue, he became mesmerised by their 'tense, theatrical melancholy'. Returning to London, Minton channelled his response to war through the filter of Berman's vision. He found his familiar haunts of Limehouse, Wapping and Poplar devastated by the German bombing campaign. Yet his paintings, for the most part, depicted not real but archetypal settings, peopled with characters imagined from the margins of society. In *London, 1941* a young

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couple poses idly in the shadows; centre-stage, and illuminated uncannily from above, are two children in rags. The composition suggests a vast architectural ruin, at the crossing of which unfolds an unspecified human tragedy.