



DAVID McCLURE



David McClure

(1926-1998)

THE ART OF PICTURE MAKING
5 - 29 MARCH 2014

Aitken Dodson

THE SCOTTISH GALLERY

CONTEMPORARY ART SINCE 1842

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Cover: Paola, Owl and Doll, 1962, oil on canvas, 63 x 76 cms (Cat. No. 29)

Left: Self Portrait, 1965, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 73 cms (Cat. No. 33)



FOREWORD

McClure had his first one-man show with The Scottish Gallery in 1957 and the succeeding decade saw regular exhibitions of his work. He was included in the important surveys of contemporary Scottish art which began to define The Edinburgh School throughout the 1960s, and culminated in his Edinburgh Festival show at The Gallery in 1969. But he was, even by 1957 (after a year painting in Florence and Sicily) in Dundee, alongside his great friend Alberto Morrocco, applying the rigour and inspiration that made Duncan of Jordanstone a bastion of painting. His friend George Mackie writing for the 1969 catalogue saw him working in a continental tradition (as well as a “west coast Scot living on the east coast whose blood is part Welsh and wholly Celt”) and exemplary of the artist as antidote to the dour Scot.

“The morose characteristics by which we recognise ourselves... have no place in our painting which is traditionally gay and life-enhancing.” Towards the end of his exhibiting life Teddy Gage reviewing his show of 1994 celebrates his best qualities in the tradition of Gillies, Redpath and Maxwell but in particular admires the qualities of his recent Sutherland paintings: “the bays and inlets where translucent seas flood over white shores.” We can see McClure today, fifteen years or so after his passing, as a distinctive figure that made a vital contribution in the mainstream of Scottish painting, as an individual with great gifts, intellect and curiosity about nature, people and ideas.

GUY PEPLOE, THE SCOTTISH GALLERY

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition catalogue opens with a series of works carried out during, or inspired by the artist's period of War Service as a Bevin Boy in the mines of West Lothian. Previously he had been studying English and History at Glasgow University but his mining experiences seemed to have helped determine that an already strong interest in the visual arts developed into a need to paint. On his father's side of the family were several generations of Lochwinnoch furniture designers and manufacturers; many of the great, Clyde-built liners were fitted out with Lochwinnoch furniture and decorative woodwork. His father, Robert, in his spare time was active in the local Art Society, went to drawing classes and even painted portraits of locals' prize pets or racing pigeons.

David McClure first enrolled in the Fine Art Course at Edinburgh, the student's time divided between History of Art at the University and Drawing and Painting at the Art College. Tellingly, after a year, he moved solely to the Art College and to painting.

Perhaps this background goes some way to explain the rigour one finds in his approach to painting, a discipline that could perhaps be recommended to many today. He did not leave his intellectual or even literary faculties at the studio door so that his work can often have symbolic as well as emotional (and, yes, decorative) content. There can be present whimsy, wit, devilment and irony, but never at the cost of good painting, his work sitting solidly within that well-documented tradition of 20th century Scottish Painting characterised by strength of colour and confident handling of paint. As a bold and inspired colourist McClure had few equals.

His intellectual curiosity also led him to experiment with different media including collage and he had a lifelong commitment to working on paper: with brush, pen, watercolour and gouache. His subjects could be musical, intimate, fantastical or serious, but he returned again and again to still life, the nude and landscape as the subjects through which he could explore composition and celebrate the beauty of the natural world.

The family home in Strawberry Bank in Dundee was filled with objects, rich fabrics and pictures, many by artist friends, everything resonant with meaning and association. For a guest the conversation was always stimulating and wide-ranging, helped along by liberally poured whisky and sustained by a fine eclectic table.

McClure was one of a group of highly regarded young painters that included James Cumming, William Baillie, John Houston, Elizabeth Blackadder and David Michie all of whom graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in the early 1950s having benefited in their formative years from the examples of a remarkable concentration of talent in the capital, both on the Art College staff and in the annual exhibitions of the RSA, RSW, SSA or SSWA. In addition, The Scottish Gallery were regularly showing established artists such as Anne Redpath, William Gillies, William MacTaggart, as well as younger artists such as Joan Eardley and Robin Philipson. McClure and many of his Edinburgh College peers soon joined them.

His early work demonstrates how much was learned from this rich milieu. *Houses in Millport*, 1955 (Cat. No. 15) shows the tonal influence of Robert Henderson Blyth while Gillies' studio



Exhibition of McClure's Diploma paintings, Edinburgh College of Art, 1951

work (and MacTaggart's) may be traced in *Still Life with Jug and Grapes* (Cat. No. 8) or *Still Life on a Stool*, 1957 (Cat. No. 21). Redpath was a major influence perhaps here most discernable in his gouache work from Florence and Sicily. These mixed influences, and others, such as the watercolours and drawings of Willie Wilson, profound and vital as they were, are arguably more of a stylistic nature and did not lead the artist outwith the standard genres of still life or landscape.

In this respect, perhaps the most profound influence upon McClure was that of John Maxwell, an intense interest and admiration resulting in his excellent monograph for Edinburgh University Press published in 1976. The example of Maxwell [and through him no doubt of Chagall and Redon] however, produced a shift in approach and intent. This is perhaps seen more clearly in a series of works of the early 1960's where figures, flowers, animals and objects, often in twilight or night-time landscapes, float together in enigmatic and tender narratives. These often involve the artist's young daughter Paola [her "Dreams"] as in *Paola, Owl and Doll*, 1962 (Cat. No. 24) or else can take the form of sensual celebration of his wife and muse, Joyce as in *Figure & Flowers*, 1963 (Cat. No. 31).

A subsequent group of figure paintings however contain some of the most surprising and challenging works produced by the artist. Although they have antecedents in religious subjects of a more mildly satirical nature (*The Ritualists*, 1962 (Cat. No. 26)) these new works from 1964 draw specifically on his experiences of Sicily, where he worked for six months in 1957. The catalyst for these biting commentaries on the power and influence of organised religion

and organised crime (*Come to Sunny Sicily*, 1964 (Cat. No. 32)) must undoubtedly have been the "First Mafia War" then currently filling the media with its reporting of corruption, bloody massacres and police crackdowns.

These works are perhaps all the more surprising because the majority of the artist's oeuvre is warm and optimistic: a celebration of the abundance and fecundity of nature as witnessed by sumptuous displays of flowers or again by paintings of Joyce, sometimes intimately observed as mother and wife in the interior of their Dundee home, other times as in *The Yellow Studio* (Cat. No. 38) straightforwardly as artist's model.

In this mature vein McClure turned quite unashamedly to the European mainstream for inspiration coming close to the spirit of the Post-Impressionist masters, Matisse, Gauguin, Braque, Chagall or Redon; all art of the past was seen by McClure as a heritage to be openly and knowingly acknowledged and celebrated, its rich veins of style and genres to be mined and wrought to aid his own picture making.

He was periodically dogged by ill-health but not until the very end did this affect the vigour and spontaneity of his painting indeed in his last years he produced some of the finest, direct landscapes of his career inspired by summer visits to North-West Sutherland. (*Gate Posts at Culkein - Drumbeg*, 1994 (Cat. No. 47))

Much of the artist's generosity and his fascination with the world around him, which made him such a good companion, permeate the rich and varied work he has left us.

ROBIN McCLURE



- 1 *Mine Workings I*, 1946
pen & wash, 17 x 23 cms
dated lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP162)

Like many Scottish Bevin Boys, McClure trained initially at Townhill in Dunfermline but the only title on one of these landscapes indicates they depict West Lothian. All but a few Bevin Boy records from part of the Midlands were tragically destroyed in the 1950s. Shamefully, it is only in the last few years that Bevin Boys or their surviving widows were deemed fit to be awarded War Service medals or attend the annual Cenotaph service and march-past.

They were predominantly conscripted on a ballot basis and although a small number of younger men of call-up age volunteered to be sent down the mines, it was also a favoured punishment for Conscientious Objectors. We do not know what circumstances led to McClure's experience as a Bevin Boy. Life in the mines was fraught with danger: injuries were frequent and the fact that he contracted tuberculosis in the 1970s and had respiratory problems in later life may have been due in part to his period down the mines.



- 2 *Cubist Mining Landscape IV*, 1947
watercolour & ink, 13 x 18 cms
signed and dated lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP14)



3 *Kneeling Miner Working III*, 1948
ink & wash, 17.5 x 10.5 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP24)



- 4 *Crawling Miner with Pit Props*, 1948
ink & wash, 12 x 14 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP21)

Although many of McClure's mining-themed works come from his time serving as a Bevin Boy during and after World War II, it is clear that they continued after he was discharged from service. The dates recorded on these pieces indicate that some may have been part of his entry portfolio for Edinburgh College of Art where he enrolled in 1947. His experience of the mines certainly formed the basis for some of his work in his early college years. The Cubist abstraction in some of these works recall Graham Sutherland (a fine reproduction of Sutherland's *Sun Setting Between Hills* was found in a portfolio of McClure's early work) while thematically there are interestingly coincidental links with the work Josef Herman was producing in Wales from the mid 1940s.



- 5 *Cubist Mining Landscape I*, 1947
pastel & watercolour, 19 x 27 cms
signed and dated upper right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WPII)



6 *Blue Miner*, c.1948
watercolour & ink, 25 x 18.5 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP170)

- 7 *The Black Funnel*, c.1948
oil on board, 35.5 x 45.5 cms
signed lower right; dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (68)

The then still bustling Port of Leith, with its cargo boats, bridges, piers and dockside buildings, was the source of much material during the artist's college days. On a study trip to London at this time, wharfs and barges on the Thames remained his principal subject matter.



- 8 *Still Life with Jug and Grapes*, c.1950
oil on canvas on board, 37 x 45 cms
signed lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (148)



- 9 Spanish Town with Church I, 1953
gouache, 38.5 x 50 cms
signed lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP33)

The winter of 1952/3 saw the artist's Travelling Scholarship from Edinburgh College of Art which he undertook with his great friend, fellow student Hamish Reid.

While they took in Paris briefly at the beginning and Florence at the end, most of their studies and painting was in Spain including a lengthy stay in Toledo.

I have done several drawings here – and also two paintings, so that now I feel I am really getting something from the scholarship – apart from the terrific stimulus of seeing all these wonderful paintings – above all El Greco.

This is a very nice pension we have here – the cooking is excellent. Our room has a balcony overlooking the Plaza Zocadover – the main square in the town.

(From a letter home from Toledo to the artist's parents, 3rd Nov 1952)

In 2006 The Scottish Gallery held a joint exhibition of the two friends' Spanish work, principally those from Toledo, Cadaques and Torremolinos (a small fishing village in those days!). Working in pen and ink, gouache and watercolour both artists revealed a strong common debt to the work of their immediate mentors both at College and the wider Edinburgh School particularly the work of Sir William Gillies, Anne Redpath and Henderson Blyth. Such close-hand "learning" by younger artists from the work of their more established peers was much more common practice in those days.

The more formalised oil *Starry Night, Toledo, Spain* (Cat. No. 11) would have been completed on McClure's return, based on gouaches and drawings.





10 *Figure in Cape and Beret*, c.1952-3
ink wash, 20 x 19 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP126)



- 11 *Starry Night, Toledo, Spain, 1953*
oil on canvas on board, 35.5 x 53.5 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (81)

- 12 *Boats at a Quay*, 1954
oil on board, 30.5 x 41 cms
signed lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (83)



- 13 *Still Life with Griddle and Colander, Millport, 1955*
pen & ink, 46 x 41 cms
signed and dated lower right

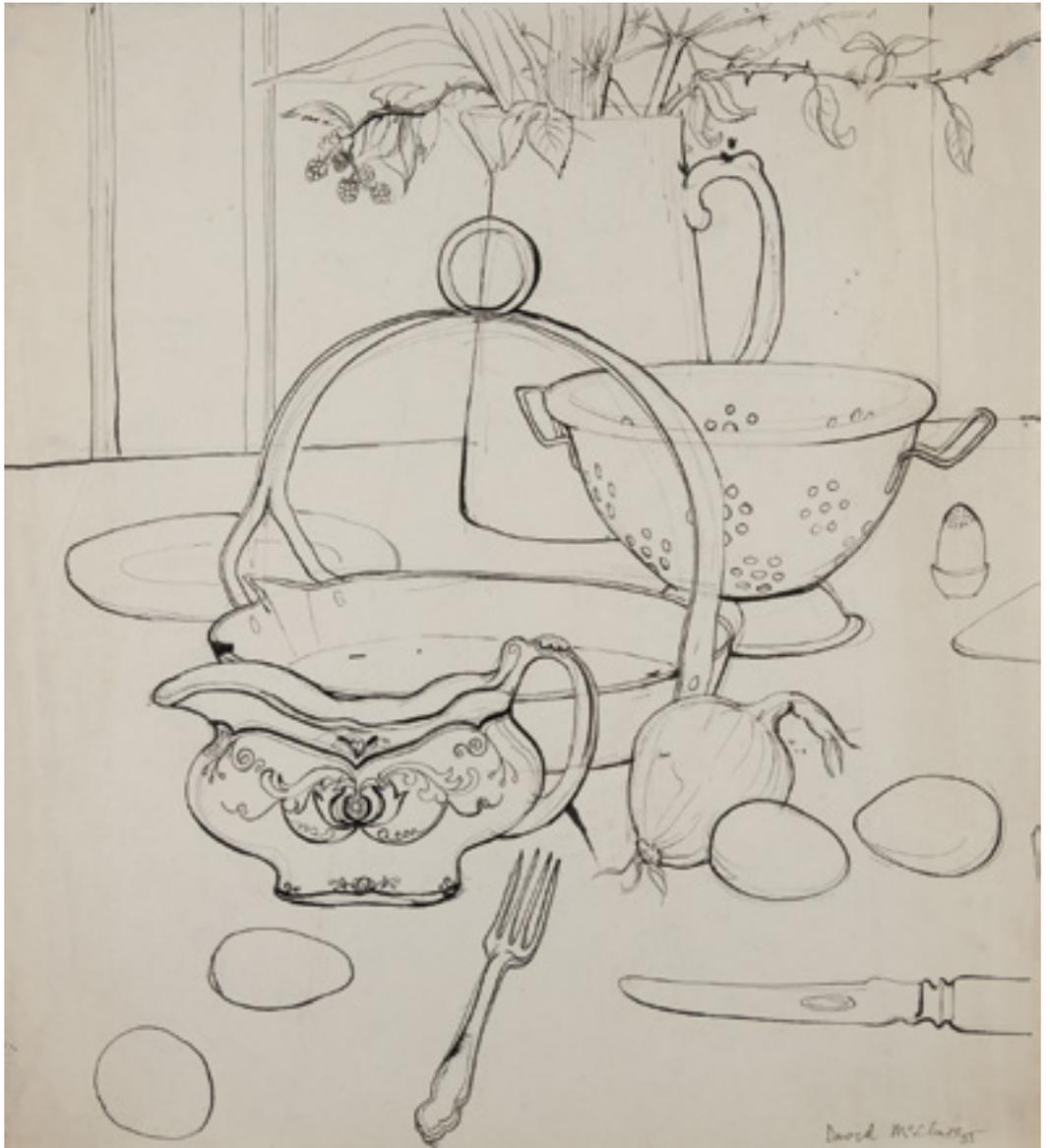
PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP43)

Having taught part-time at Edinburgh College of Art from 1953, McClure was awarded an Andrew Grant Scholarship by the college in 1955. This afforded him a degree of financial comfort and allowed him a period as a full-time artist. David and Joyce with their eight month old son, Robin, spent several weeks during the very cold winter of 1955/6 in Millport, the only town on the island of Great Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde, where Joyce had spent many happy childhood holidays.

That winter however was particularly bleak and this certainly comes across in many of the works. Perhaps too the bitterly cold conditions were partly the reason for the series of superb pen and ink drawings of hedgerow gatherings or kitchen utensils set in the interior of their rented house, often with the view out from their window across Millport Bay as a background. When it was clement enough to work outside, the harbour, seafront buildings, the more intimate weathered-walled lanes and smaller cottages or the surrounding countryside provided further material for pen drawings, gouaches and some wonderfully handled charcoals. The influence of Redpath, Gillies and (particularly in the charcoals and inks works) Henderson Blyth are again evident in many works.

These works formed part of McClure's first UK solo exhibition at The Scottish Gallery in November 1957.





14 Millport, 1956
charcoal, 45 x 55 cms
signed and dated lower left

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate



15 Houses in Millport, 1956
charcoal, 45 x 55 cms
signed and dated lower right

PROVENANCE
The Artist's Estate



Artist painting on the terrace, Florence, 1956

- 16 *The Duomo, Florence, 1956*
watercolour, 48 x 62 cms
signed and dated lower left

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate

EXHIBITED

David McClure – Oils and Works on Paper, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, March 2003

Following the harsh winter painting in Millport, the McClures moved with son Robin to a much warmer Florence in May 1956 where they spent six happy months, before moving to Sicily in November. For the artist it was an extremely fruitful period painting townscapes of Florentine streets with their palazzi, churches and market stalls (and some still life works of market produce) as well as landscapes of the countryside and hill villages that lie around the city. Their rooms on the first floor of a villa in Via Ugo Foscolo, west of the Pitti Palace to the south of the River Arno afforded magnificent views back over the city and its distinctive skyline with the Campanile and Duomo.

Some of these works were shown in a group exhibition in Pistoia Museum, while he was still staying in Florence, which he held with three other young painters, two American and one Norwegian. Others were later shown at his 1957 exhibition at The Scottish Gallery.





17 *Florence and the Hills of Fiesole*, 1956
gouache, 46 x 56 cms
signed and dated lower right; signed, dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate



18 Street in Florence, 1956
gouache, 49 x 70 cms
signed and dated lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP203)



Boats in the Harbour, Sicily, 1956

- 19 *Beached Boat*, 1956
gouache, 37 x 52 cms
signed and dated lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP79)



20 *Beached Boat and Trees*, c.1957
oil on board, 45.5 x 63.5 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (86)

In November 1956 the McClures left Florence and moved south to Sicily. Through a hotelier friend from Edinburgh they were put in touch with the daughter of the Duca di Salaparuta, producer of the well-known Corvo wine and for the next six months they lived in the top storey of the medieval tower house on the main square of the small town of Casteldaccia not far from Palermo, the building being the Duke's main wine store.

Casteldaccia itself provided some material as did the surrounding countryside but perhaps the most successful work was painted at the coast in the small villages such as Aspra, Porticello and Sant'Elia with their brightly coloured fishermen's houses and fishing boats.

McClyure held an exhibition of his Florentine and Sicilian work at the Circolo di Cultura in Palermo in January 1957 while still living in Casteldaccia, and Sicilian work was again included in his 1957 show at The Scottish Gallery after his return to Scotland in the spring of that year.

- 21 *Still Life on a Stool with Pear*, 1957
oil on canvas, 51 x 61 cms
signed lower left

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate

EXHIBITED

Paintings by David McClure, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 1957, Cat. No. 16

Painted after the artist's return to Edinburgh from Sicily that year.



22 *Blue Still Life*, 1958
gouache on card, 45 x 55 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP286)





23 *Cottage with Cattle II*, c.1959
pen & wash, 34 x 44 cms

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (WP109)



24 Fortrose, 1959
pen & ink, 27 x 36 cms
signed lower left

PROVENANCE
The Artist's Estate

EXHIBITED
David McClure – Oils and Works on Paper, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, March 2003

25 *Metamorphosis of the Lion*, 1961/62

oil on canvas, 81 x 91.5 cms

signed lower left

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (16)

EXHIBITED

Paintings by David McClure, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 1962, Cat. No. 45

This is one of several works from the early 60s specifically on the theme of metamorphosis but intriguing (or mischievous) visual “games” and ambiguity play a significant role elsewhere in the artist's work. There are echoes here perhaps of George Stubbs' *Lion Attacking a Horse* (1769) or Gericault's later version of the same subject.



26 *The Ritualists*, 1962

oil on canvas, 91.5 x 101.5 cms

signed upper right; signed, dated and inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (12)

EXHIBITED

Paintings by David McClure, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 1962, Cat. No. 46; *David McClure Memorial Exhibition*, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 2000

Infantas, *Icons*, *Kings and Bishops on horseback* feature in another strong but narratively enigmatic series of works from this period.

While undoubtedly based in part on his own experiences of religious processions and services and works seen in the churches he visited whilst in Spain, Florence and Sicily, church interiors also feature in the work of Anne Redpath (David and Joyce were very close to Anne). Regal and religious figures also appear in some of Robin Philipson's Roualt-inspired work from the later 1950s.





27 *Horseman with Icons II*, 1962
oil on board, 48 x 38 cms
signed lower right; signed and inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (85)

EXHIBITED

Paintings by David McClure, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 1962, Cat. No. 39

The draped horse in this and further similar works is surely inspired by Simone Martini's equestrian portrait of Guidoriccio da Fogliano in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, which McClure would have visited while he was resident in Florence.



28 *Horsemen with Icons*, 1962
watercolour, 39.5 x 51.5 cms
signed & dated lower right

EXHIBITED

Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour, Edinburgh

- 29 *Paola, Owl and Doll*, 1962
oil on canvas, 63 x 76 cms
signed and dated lower left, signed and dated verso

PROVENANCE

Private Collection

EXHIBITED

Paintings by David McClure, The Scottish Gallery, 1962, Cat. No. 41

The artist's young daughter Paola had already put in an appearance in some of the "Ritualist" paintings but, simultaneously, she had her own series.

The basic concept was of that of a child's dream. The moon and an owl, obvious night emblems, appear in all these works, the child drifting gently through various floating arrangements of horses, jugs of flowers, eggs in egg cups, clocks, tables and chairs.

Here perhaps Redon and certainly Chagall are his background sources, unquestionably channeled through his tutor, John Maxwell, whose work he greatly admired.



30 *Paola with Flowers*, c.1963
oil on board, 76 x 63 cms
signed lower right



- 31 *Figure and Flowers*, 1963
oil on canvas, 76 x 63.5 cms
signed and dated lower left; titled and signed verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (114)

Another work with a similar atmosphere and influence to the previous picture but this time it is the artist's wife Joyce who is his Muse. It is one of a series painted during and following the family's two-month stay in Norway in the very hot summer of 1963 after McClure had accepted an invitation from the Norwegian Government.

This came through the recommendation of Fanny Aavatsmark, the wife of Sir William MacTaggart at that time President of the RSA. She had previously been one of the organisers of the controversial and influential Edvard Munch exhibition staged by the SSA in Edinburgh in 1931, an exhibition that made a strong impression on many of the young Scottish artists of the time, MacTaggart included, and one which attracted large numbers of visitors partly due to the growing column inches of lively debate in *The Scotsman* and elsewhere at the time. (Fanny obviously made an impression on MacTaggart too!)

The accommodation offered to the McClures was in one of two rows of two storey wooden apartments with studios and studies run by the State for Norwegian and International artists, writers and composers. These had been built at Ekely on the outskirts of Oslo, on land left to the nation by Munch and where he had his Winter Studio.



- 32 *Come to Sunny Sicily*, 1964
oil on canvas, 71.5 x 91.5 cms
signed lower right; signed, dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (58)

In 1964 a remarkable series of powerful works grew out of the enigmatic and mildly satirical religious works of the previous years, undoubtedly sparked by recent events in Sicily, where the McClures had relatively recently lived. Known as the “First Mafia War”, the early 1960s saw an escalation of violent slayings and bloody reprisals as rival drug and crime gangs fought for supremacy. In the same period the “Sack of Palermo” saw leaders of the controlling and inaptly named Christian Democratic Party collude with Mafia interests in the property and construction industry to build vast numbers of apartment blocks, destroying the city’s green belt and many fine villas.

The Italian Government’s response was a police crackdown and the constitution of the Antimafia Commission. McClure’s was a series of works of biting comment on the often hypocritical and corrupt relationship between politics, organised religion and organised crime in a country where so many still lived in poverty.

Perhaps too his own recent experience of the psychologically charged work of Edvard Munch at the Munch Museum in Oslo (it had only opened in 1963, the year the McClure family stayed in Norway) and Munch’s dealing with the basic themes of Love, Life and Death, further emboldened McClure to engage with large contemporary issues.



- 33 *Self Portrait*, 1965
oil on canvas, 91.5 x 73.5 cms
signed and dated lower right; signed, dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate





34 *Still Life in a Landscape*, c.1967
oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cms
signed lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (110)



35 *Bird, Horse and Flowers*, 1967
ink & watercolour, 20 x 25.5 cms
signed & dated lower right

EXHIBITED

Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour, Edinburgh

36 *Mandolin and Vase*, 1969
oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76 cms
signed lower right

PROVENANCE

Private Collection

EXHIBITED

David McClure – Paintings, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, Festival Exhibition, 1969,
Cat. No. 28

This and the following work come from McClure's hugely successful 1969 Edinburgh Festival Exhibition at The Scottish Gallery in Castle Street in which there were two major themes – sensual nudes or models in an interior and still life/picture on an easel compositions.

In many of the latter (and more overtly elsewhere than the examples here) McClure plays visual games with the genre of the “tipped tabletop” still life much used by Redpath and Gillies and others of the Edinburgh School. In this the tabletop is seen as if from above while the still life objects are arranged and shown as if viewed from a more normal, less elevated angle. In McClure's works a deliberate confusion is often set up. Is it a picture of a painting on an easel or of objects on a tabletop? In some where it is more overtly the former, he can create further confusion by mischievously allowing flowers heads or tops of jugs to escape out over the edge of the suggested canvas on the easel and into the painting's “real space”.



37 *Mandolin IV*, 1969
oil on canvas, 76.5 x 63.5 cms
signed lower right, signed and titled verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate

EXHIBITED

David McClure –Paintings, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, Festival Exhibition, 1969,
Cat. No. 27; *David McClure Memorial Exhibition*, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh, 2000



38 *The Yellow Studio*, c.1969
 oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76 cms
 signed lower left

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (148)

A “Yellow Studio” of larger size was listed in the 1969 exhibition but our work is actually very probably Cat. No. 52 from that show *Harmony in Yellow II*; the work is not inscribed with the artist's own title. However it certainly relates to the many “Model in an Interior” works both in the show and from later in the artist's oeuvre which wring variations from a much-used genre with Matisse being here the most relevant predecessor. The constructed settings are an imaginary combination of the artist's studio and living room in Dundee, with the picture space defined only by the angles and perspective of furniture, rugs, a window, hung paintings or a wall-mirror all set against a single, strong flat background colour used for both wall and floor. Again a painting on an easel usually appears, usually the one for which the model is sitting, although not always. In our example you are being invited into the artist's studio during the painting of *Girl with Mandolin*, a small sketch for which appears in this current exhibition. The model is there for another sitting, taking off her robe prior to putting on the harem pants she is wearing in the easel painting and sitting down on the rug with the mandolin we see behind her.

The blanket box is one painted by the artist inspired by similar furniture he saw in Norway in the impressive Museum of Folk Art. Anne Redpath of course had also painted furniture inspired in her case by similar French examples and indeed the lamp in the background here is sitting on a tea-chest she painted and which the artist owned; the tall vase on the floor has appeared previously in our Cat. No. 36 *Mandolin and Vase*.



- 39 *Boats and Floats*, 1974
oil on canvas, 71 x 91 cms
signed and dated upper right, dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

Private Collection

The fishing villages of Angus and the Mearns, the East Neuk of Fife (he had an extended painting trip there with Anne Redpath, her son David Michie and Hamish Reid in 1952) and the Moray coast were rich sources of material for the artist; he once bemoaned the fact that many of the Fife villages were being conserved, renovated and generally tidied up losing their rich texture of weathered harling, paintwork and interesting jumble of fishing paraphernalia. *Boats and Floats*, 1974 is one of at least three works of similar composition, the first of which is from 1966, based on drawings of fishermen's houses and Smokie sheds in Arbroath, which sits in a Dundee sketchbook started in 1965. Knowing McClure's working methods, however, it is not unlikely that elements from elsewhere were brought into play to construct these images.



40 *Flowers and Black Jug*, 1974
oil on canvas, 51 x 61 cms
signed lower right; inscribed with title verso

McClure is a hedonistic painter, rejoicing in the tactile abundance of life. The rich glowing surfaces of his flower paintings are a celebration, a passionate embracing of the world. Without transcribing nature, the variety and richness of the natural world suffuses the paintings.

John Morrison, University of Aberdeen, October 1994





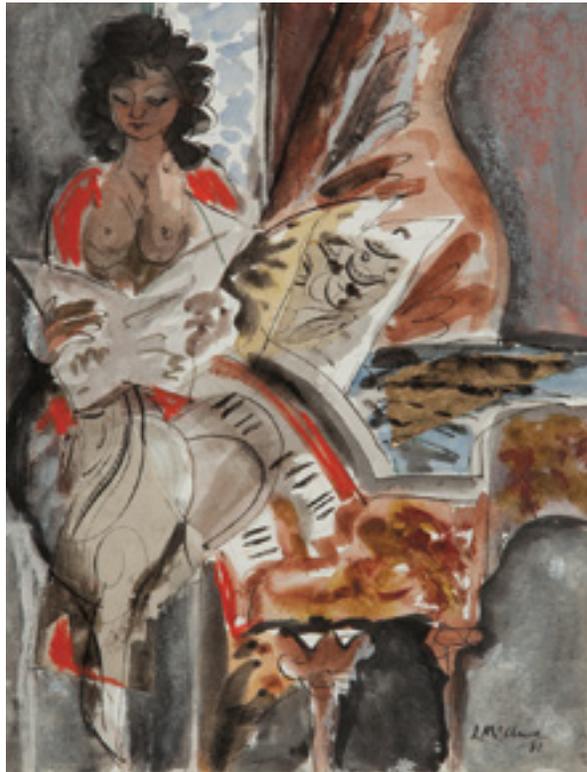
41 *Seated Girl and Marble Table*, 1971
ink & gouache, 19 x 22 cms
signed and dated lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate

Another Matisse-inspired female figure in an interior although this time she is sitting for a draped portrait rather than nude. The large, gilt Venetian mirror in the background reflects the artist, brush raised to easel, psychologically putting you, the viewer in the artist's place. (Velasquez's *Las Meninas* in reverse?)

The mirror was used in a great many of his interiors, with or without the artist. It had been rescued after being dumped during the renovation of an Italian café behind the Art College in Dundee in the early 1960s. The artist once said it had repaid many times over the (much appreciated) beer money earned by a group of his students who carried it along the Hawkhill and down Strawberry Bank. The small picture on the left is perhaps based on a Picasso etching, an extremely generous housewarming gift from their great friend Willie Wilson when the McClures moved to Dundee; sadly it was one of two items taken by some sneak thieves years later. McClure liked to feign distress that none of his works were taken!



- 42 *Girl at Piano*, 1981
mixed media & collage, 23 x 18 cms
signed and dated lower right

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (87)

This work reveals McClure's admiration of Welsh painter Ceri Richards, particularly his music related work, itself variously inspired by Matisse, Picasso and Braque. Note the collage elements torn from fancifully decorative script from the front of a book of sheet music and used for both drapery swirls and musical notation.

- 43 *Japanese Kite and Fireworks*, 1978
oil on board, 30 x 63.5 cms
signed and dated lower right; signed, dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

Private Collection, Fife



- 44 Nocturne, 1982
mixed media & collage, 57 x 45 cms
signed and dated upper left

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate

The numerous music collages ran over several years in the early 1980s, often in series and most with titles drawn from Classical Music or Jazz each according to the mood or intention in the particular piece such as *Allegro con brio* or *Slow Blues* (you can guess the colour theme on that one, McClure not being averse to a bit of word play in addition to his visual punning!)

McClure was himself an enthusiastic, thoughtful and often inspired jazz pianist, habitually after an evening in the studio and usually between his second and third large Crawford's 3 Star. He particularly admired the work of the brilliant Bill Evans, although more than one Dundee party saw him help swing Alberto Morrocco's "Satchmo" with or without the Sidney Bechet clarinet of Morrocco's son Leon.



- 45 *Yellow Pepper and Mushrooms*, 1986
oil on board, 63.5 x 76 cms
signed lower right; signed, dated and inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

Private Collection

EXHIBITED

Thackeray Gallery, 1986; Royal Scottish Academy, 1987, Cat. No. 193



46 *Still Life with Japanese Print*, c.1990
oil on board, 76 x 101.5 cms
signed lower right; signed, dated & inscribed with title verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate





47 Gate Posts at Culkein - Drumbeg, 1994
oil on board, 38 x 61 cms
signed lower right; titled and signed verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate

As mentioned in Guy Peploe's foreword, McClure's work from the earlier 1990s saw a concentration on the landscape of West Sutherland, north of Lochinver. A series of family holidays in the 1970s (with Dundee friends and colleagues Gordon and Ellen Cameron, Dick and Ann Hunter and family and Val and Roselle Morrocco) had produced some fine work of perhaps a relatively more prosaic nature. In the later work, scattered crofts and winding, undulating single-track roads may provide structure while the shapes of beached fishing cobbles are set against wave-sculpted patterns of sand dune and grass; startling coloured nylon fishing rope, tangles of nets and fluorescent plastic buoys, thread together and punctuate these rich, flowing, late-flowering compositions.



48 *Blue Gate*, c.1992
oil on canvas, 51 x 61 cms
signed lower right; signed and titled verso

PROVENANCE

The Artist's Estate (87)

DAVID McCLURE RSA RSW (1926-1998) CHRONOLOGY

- 1926 Born in Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire, son of a Scottish furniture designer and a Welsh schoolteacher.
Educated at Queen's Park School, Glasgow.
- 1943-44 Attended Glasgow University studying English and History.
War service as Bevin Boy working down the mines.
- 1947-49 Took up studies on Fine Art Degree Course then jointly run between the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh College of Art, combining Drawing and Painting and Art History.
- 1949-52 Edinburgh College of Art. Switched to Painting Diploma Course to paint full time.
- 1950 Married in Glasgow to Joyce Flanigan.
- 1951 Elected member of SSA.
- 1952 Painting trip to Fife with wife Joyce, Anne Redpath, David Michie and Hamish Reid.
- 1952-53 Travelling Scholarship to France, Spain and Italy.
- 1953-55 Taught part time at Edinburgh College of Art.
- 1954 Awarded a Residency by Shell to paint at their oil refinery at Ardrossan.
- 1955 Birth of first son Robin.
- 1955-57 Recipient of Andrew Grant Scholarship which led to period of travelling and painting in Scotland, Florence and Sicily with wife Joyce and son Robin.
- 1955-56 Spent winter months painting in Millport, Scotland.
- May - Nov 1956 Lived and worked in Florence, Italy.
- November 1956 Moved south to Sicily where he lived and worked until May 1957.
- January 1957 First solo exhibition at Circolo di Cultura, Palermo, Sicily.

- May 1957 Returns to Scotland.
Painted ceiling decorations and murals for the reconstructed King's Room at Falkland Palace, Fife.
First exhibition at The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh.
- 1957-83 Lecturer in Drawing and Painting, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee under Alberto Morrocco.
- 1958 Birth of daughter Paola.
- 1959 Birth of second son Kevin.
- 1963 Elected ARSA.
At the invitation of the Norwegian Cultural Department spent three months living and painting with his family in an artists' colony on the outskirts of Oslo.
- 1965 Elected member of the RSW.
- 1967-69 President of the SSA.
- 1971 Elected member of the RSA.
Commissioned by architects Wheeler and Sprossan to paint a mural for the staff common room at the University of St. Andrews.
- 1976 Monograph on John Maxwell published for Edinburgh University Press.
- 1983-85 Head of Painting, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, succeeding Alberto Morrocco.
- 1985 Retired from teaching to paint full-time.
- 1988 Death of wife Joyce.
- 1990 Elected member of the RGI.
- 1996 70th Birthday Exhibition at The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1998 Died in Dundee on his 72nd birthday.

Solo Exhibitions

- 1957 Circolo di Cultura, Palermo, Sicily
- 1957 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1961 The Saltire Society, Edinburgh
- 1962 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1965 University of Birmingham
- 1966 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1967 Loomshop Gallery, Lower Largo, Fife
- 1969 The Scottish Gallery (Edinburgh Festival Exhibition)
- 1970 Bondgate Gallery, Alnwick
- 1975 Loomshop Gallery, Lower Largo, Fife
- 1977 Haddington House, Haddington
- 1978 Thackeray Gallery, London
- 1982 The Macaulay Gallery, Stenton (Edinburgh Festival Exhibition)
- 1983 Fairmaid's House Perth
- 1984 Dunkeld Festival of Arts
- 1986 Thackeray Gallery, London
- 1988 Fine Art Society, Edinburgh and Glasgow (40 Years Retrospective)
- 1989 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1991 Thackeray Gallery London
- 1992 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1993 Thackeray Gallery, London
- 1994 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1996 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh (70th Birthday Exhibition)
- 2000 Memorial Exhibition, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 2003 Oils and Works on Paper, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 2014 The Art of Picture Making, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh

Selected Collections

Aberdeen Art Gallery

Argyll Education Committee

University of Dundee

Dundee Art Gallery

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

University of Edinburgh

Heriot-Watt University

University of Stirling

Edinburgh City Art Centre

RSA Thorburn Ross Collection

University of St Andrews

Glasgow Art Gallery

Perth Art Gallery

Paisley Museum and Art Gallery

The Fleming-Wyfold Art Foundation

Shell Petroleum Company

Bank of Scotland

British Rail

BBC Scotland

Edinburgh Fund Managers

Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne

University of Birmingham

Works in numerous Private Collections including USA,
Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, France, Turkey,
Norway, Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom.



David McClure, Barcelona 1953



David's Graduation, Edinburgh College of Art, 29th June 1951



Sicilian invitation, pitture italiane, 1957



University of St Andrews staff common room mural by David McClure, 1971



The Artist in costume for a Dundee Revel



Voucher for the journey home from Palermo to Glasgow, May 1957



David McClure on the bank of the Seine, Paris 1952



Joyce McClure, Anne Redpath and Hamish Reid, Fife, 1952



Catalogue for the Artist's Festival Exhibition at The Scottish Gallery, August 1969



David McClure and Alberto Morrocco at Strawberry Bank, Dundee



The McClure family with, on the left, a temporary "shipmate", arriving at Kristiansand, Norway, 1963



Joyce and Robin, Millport, 2nd February 1956

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www.scottish-gallery.co.uk/davidmcclure

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The Scottish Gallery wish to thank the McClure family for their integral contribution to the organisation of this exhibition and are particularly grateful to Robin for his research and his picture notes which accompany the illustrations in this catalogue.

The McClure family in their turn expressed a wish to record their pleasure at seeing their father's work displayed in its natural Scottish home and wish to thank all those involved at The Scottish Gallery.

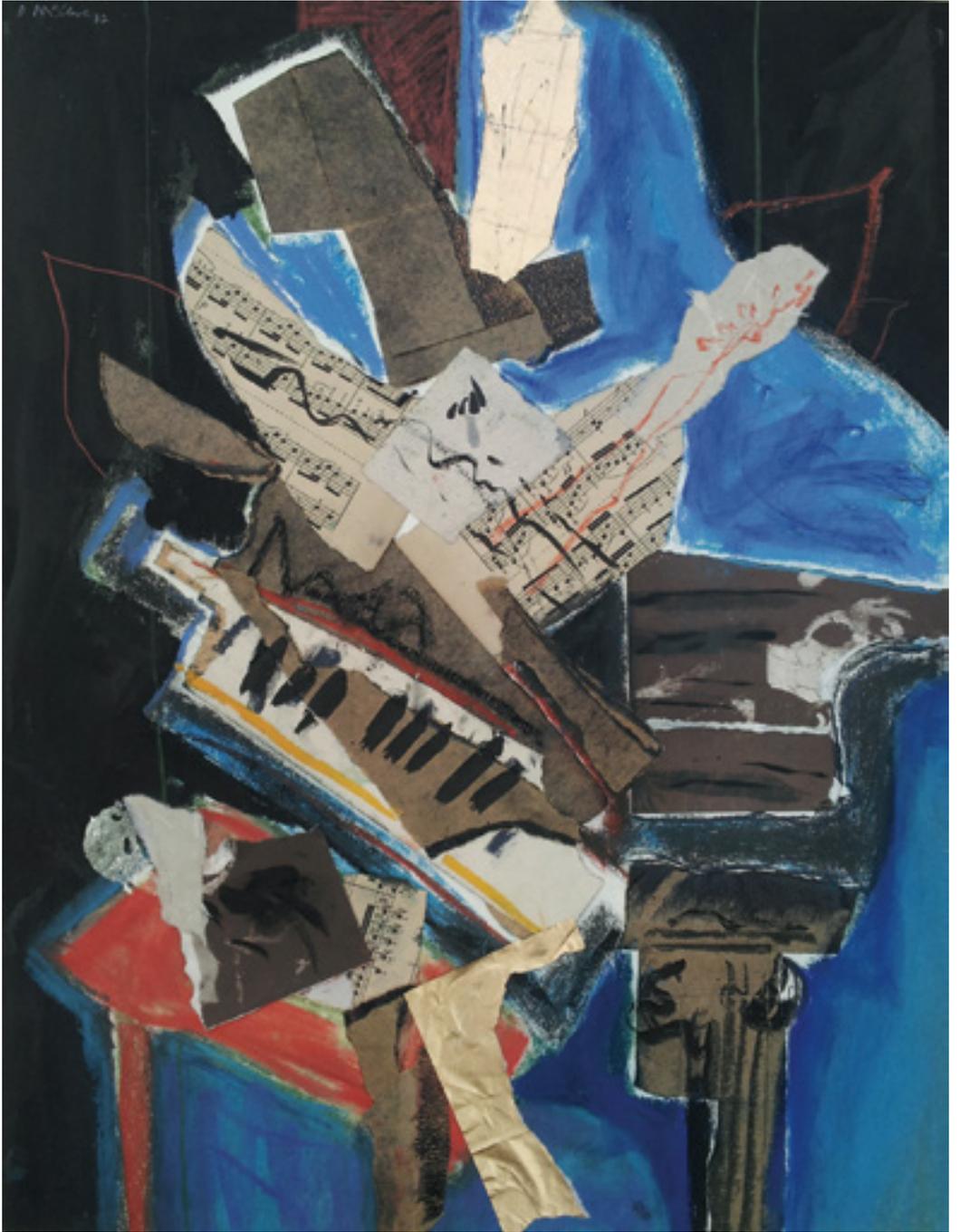
Robin would also like to thank Stuart Brien for his advice and all at Brien Nicholson for their apt and skilful framing, Kenneth Gray and Elizabeth Wemyss for their work on the catalogue and of course Carole, Calum and Scott McClure, as ever, all more than deserving of thanks for all their work towards the selection of this show and the general on-going management of the McClure Estate.

Aitken Dottson

THE SCOTTISH GALLERY
CONTEMPORARY ART SINCE 1842

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Right: Nocturne, 1982, mixed media & collage, 57 x 45 cms (Cat. No. 44)



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