



The Returned Seaman

Peter Lanyon

Not on display

Title/Description: The Returned Seaman

Artist/Maker: Peter Lanyon

Born: 1973 - 1973

Object Type: Lithograph, Print

Materials: Ink, Paper

Technique: Lithography

Accession Number: PLS 25

Born in 1918 in St Ives, Cornwall, Peter Lanyon became one of the most prominent British post-war artists, and a star of the St Ives artist cohort. After studying at several art schools and serving for six years in the RAF, Lanyon's early career began with assemblages that were heavily influenced by sculptors such as Naum Gabo. [1] Made from found objects such as driftwood, Lanyon was always inspired by his coastal hometown. His early paintings have naturalist flare, depicting the landscape of St Ives from unconventional perspectives, far different from what you may see in a typical landscape painting. His works often include religious imagery, war imagery and includes details of the geology and architecture of Cornwall. [2]

Lanyon was an avid glider pilot, and on his first flight in 1959 he discovered a new, exciting way of viewing his town. Inspired by this, Lanyon's style evolved into complete abstraction, with particular focus on how he witnessed the air move and flow while gliding. He had previously described his work as "heavy" before he discovered gliding; as if the air had made his work weightless. Lanyon said "the air is a very definite world of activity, as complex and demanding as the sea". [3] We see this in *The Returned Seaman* with the large sweeping figure flowing out from the sea. We also see a house in the centre and a horse. This horse motif has occurred frequently in his pieces, such as *The Yellow Runner*, 1946. In these pieces we see another common motif of mining. From a mining family, Lanyon was fascinated with things 'under the soil', such as sea caves and tin mines. [4]

Annie Richards, April 2023

[1] Chilvers, Ian and John Graves-Smith. *A Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art* (2 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199239665.001.0001/acref-9780199239665-e-1480?rskey=DIJHJx&result=1483>

[2] Peter Lanyon | TateShots <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydQskTSiDUQ>

[3] Chilvers, Ian and John Graves-Smith. *A Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art* (2 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

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[4] Gray, Maggie. 'Peter Lanyon: from gliding structures to pure abstraction'. ArtUK, 8th February 2021. <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/peter-lanyon-from-gliding-structures-to-pure-abstraction>

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Further Reading

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Peter Lanyon Soaring Flight <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsu0Mln8TS0>

Peter Lanyon | TateShots <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydQskTSiDUQ>
