

BEAUX ARTS

Peter Lanyon
Untitled (Orpheus Construction)

1961

Oil, ceramic tile, glass, metal, wire, pine needles & wood
45 x 44.5 x 9 cm



Provenance

Direct from the estate. Gimpel Fils.

Connected with the painting "Orpheus" of the same date which won the Marzotto Prize in 1962

Exhibited

'Peter Lanyon', Gimpel Fils, London: 16/01-21/02/09

Sail Loft Gallery, 1962 "Peter Lanyon", Tate Gallery, London, 30 May - 30 June 1968, touring to: City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth; Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle; City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham; and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Cat. No 66.

Exhibition catalogue produced. "Peter Lanyon: Paintings, drawings and constructions, 1937-64",

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 25 January - 4 March 1978, touring to Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow; Kettle's Yard, Cambridge; Penwith Society of Arts, St. Ives; Royal West of England Academy of Arts, Bristol. Cat. No.73.

Exhibition catalogue produced. 'Peter Lanyon', Tate St Ives: 09/10/10-09/01/11

Description

Martin Lanyon

There is very little text by Peter Lanyon on the 'Orpheus Construction'. This is because, like so many other constructions, it was something Peter Lanyon saw this as part of the process of developing an image for a significant canvas. These constructions were (mostly) broken-up and reassembled or lost. Now, nearly 60 years later, people are showing more interested in Lanyon and they want to get to grips with why the paintings are still able to hold our attention today.

The myths of Orpheus, like Europa, provided a continuity in Lanyon's subjects that ran forwards from his 1953 stay in Anticoli Corrado (with drawings, sculptures and paintings that were titled 'Europa') through the early sixties (with drawings, constructions and paintings titled 'Orpheus')... all the way through to his very last paintings (like Clevedon Bandstand 1964) that appear to bear witness to the same Orpheus myth.

For Lanyon it was just as important to achieve that same continuity backwards in time, through traditional landscape subjects, to the very earliest of painted, mythological themes. Especially those that spoke of the seasons or of loss or of individuals in the landscape. The role of myth in Lanyon's work does requires further research and this Orpheus Construction will be a key player in any such research.

The following extracts are all from the Peter Lanyon Archive & were written by PL about the canvas titled Orpheus that was influenced by the construction.

From a 1962 letter to Lady Mander:

"I have won 2000000 lira with a painting called Orpheus. He had his troubles. Perhaps we all have a bit of him in us or Eurydice."

From 1963 British Council slideshow:

Slide No 22. Orpheus.

"Of course I may have an idea on my mind while I am painting. The story of Orpheus's search for Eurydice in the underworld and his return to the world above has always interested me, and it comes into this painting. It's a seasonal myth about the seed lying in the earth during the winter and coming back to life in the spring. The horizontal across the top divides the world from the underworld. Below there's a lyre shape and the female form of Eurydice. Orpheus himself hardly comes into the picture. To me, he's like the artist searching for his image, for the meaning of what he is doing."

Jan 1964:

Peter Lanyon also refers to the painting Orpheus as a "Myth of the Seasons" in an early draft of the lecture he gave in Prague called 'English Landscape' (Jan 1964)