



JORGENSEN FINE ART

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SPRING EXHIBITION

George Campbell was an avid collector of small figurines, mainly of African origin, which inspired him to create his series of paintings entitled *Warriors*. These he described as “standing figures all dressed up with no place to go, passed over by civilisation, subdued by the machine-gun or takeover bids or what have you. African warriors, Celtic warriors, standing just having their being, their bewildered, dignified being, all dressed up Beckett figures, a little like us, I feel”.

He liked to depict figures absorbed in what they were doing and unaware of the world around them. Generally isolated, even tragic, figures, slow, quiet and preoccupied, they are frozen in that moment, with that particular gesture and that particular stance. He could hold the moment like a note of music. He said of such paintings as these: “I paint my figures merging – now you see me, now you don’t – poised on the edge of something – probably nothing important”.

George was self-taught and developed his own techniques and theories. He was, of course, influenced by other artists. One critic said, in a disparaging way, that a Campbell solo exhibition was not unlike a group show. This is true because George was willing to experiment and go down his own byways. He enjoyed the fact that his work was scattered “Group exhibition on two legs!” he proudly declares in *Triptych*, a three-part interview which was broadcast by B.B.C. Northern Ireland the year before his death.

Nothing was ever lost with George. Everything, as he said, went into his “rusty archive”. In 1950, for example, he met the Russian artist Ossip Zadkine in Paris and he encouraged George towards abstraction by stressing the musical and spiritual qualities of paint; “I like your controlled complexities”, he said to him. George absorbed this and reproduced it over twenty years later in his 1970s *Warrior* series. The faceted planes and interlocking shapes are a direct nod to Cubism. He wasn’t so much influenced by the thinking of, say, Picasso and Braque as by the fruits of their thinking. Indicating, in the B.B.C. documentary, that he was tending more and more to the abstract, he quoted Braque’s words: “Art is there to extend your approach, not to make you feel comfortable and smug”.

Síle Connaughton-Deeny

FRONT COVER:

1. **George Campbell, RHA (1917–1979)**
Warriors
Oil on board, 39" x 29"

Photography by John Kellett
Printed by Nicholson & Bass Ltd

BACK COVER:

50. **Helen O’Hara, HBAAS (1846–1920)**
On the Coast, Co. Waterford
Watercolour, 14" x 20"