

Felix Runcie Kelly



View of Westminster Abbey at night

Reference: 11033

Dimensions:

Height: 34 cm / 13³/₈ in

Width: 30.20 cm / 11⁷/₈ in

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Signed twice l.r., oil on paper

34 x 30.2 cm; 13 2/5 x 11 9/10 inches

Framed in a black polished frame

A commission for the Dunlop Rubber Company Limited and used as a full-page advertisement in 1953 to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in numerous publications including 'The Queen' and 'The Illustrated London News'. A copy of one of the advertisements accompanies the painting. The accompanying text reads as follows:

'God Save the Queen. Once again this is a year of splendour for the Abbey in Westminster, which was built for prayer and for the anointing of Kings and Queens. Once again the triumphant trumpets give silver tongue and the people cry out "God Save the Queen" and the soft English daylight gains glory from gold and silver and precious jewels. Here, in this sacred place, time adds rich colour to the tapestry of history, as a new Queen, Elizabeth II, is anointed, crowned and enthroned. When the Queen departs from the Abbey, and the great throng is dispersed and the air is still, the glory will still be there, enshrined in this holy place, guardian of our faith and of our royal Succession.'

Kelly was a New Zealand born painter, stage designer, graphic designer, interior designer and illustrator who lived in the UK from 1935. During World War II he served in the Royal Air Force as a navigating officer. He began to paint seriously in his spare time, his work influenced by the Surrealists and with a Romantic feel while always meticulously executed. He abandons nature's topography and reinvents landscapes in a dreamlike world and his interest in architecture is often apparent in his paintings.

His first one-man show was at the Lefevre Gallery in 1943, and its success led to another exhibition the following year, when pictures by Lucien Freud and Julian Trevelyan were shown in next door rooms. That year he received a commission to illustrate the art historian and critic Herbert Read's 'The Green Child'. Read was an early admirer of Kelly's work and introduced him to a number of significant clients. The artist exhibited at Arthur Tooth from 1965-1974 and thereafter at Partridge Fine Art.

Kelly was commissioned to paint murals and interior decoration in many of England's most important houses, his good looks and charm fuelling his social popularity. At Castle Howard he executed four murals for the Garden Hall in 1982 and the 'Kelly car', a fairground-style train to take visitors around the grounds. His work enjoyed global acclaim, notably in the United States and as far away as Nepal where he decorated a room in the Royal Palace, Kathmandu. He also worked on developing architectural ideas, notably at Henbury Hall where he gothicised 'The Cave' for Sebastian de Ferranti and Highgrove where he refaced the Victorian facades and designed new plastered and pedimented frontispieces, returning the house to a more Georgian appearance for the Prince of Wales. He also painted murals in a number of Union Castle and Cunard liners.

His work is included in the collections of Tate, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, Southampton City Museum, Grosvenor Museum, Chester, Sheffield Museums and the National Trust. The R.W. Norton Art Foundation in Louisiana has a holding of his work and his archive is in the collection of the Museum of New Zealand.

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Literature

Paintings by Felix Kelly. Introduction by Herbert Read, London, 1946

Michel Remy, Surrealism in Britain, Aldershot, 1999

Donald Bassett, Fix, The Life and Art of Felix Kelly, Darrow Press

Donald Bassett, Felix Kelly, Herbert Read and Neo-Romanticism, British Art Journal - Vol. 8 No. 2, September 2007