

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**David Jones 1895-1974**  
**THE LATE PAINTINGS**  
**Mythological Studies, Chalice paintings, Tree Drawings, Painted Inscription and**  
**Drawings of Girls from Private Collections.**

*Exhibition 8 May to 20 June 2010*  
*Open Wednesday to Friday 11 am to 6 pm and Saturday and Sunday 2 - 5 pm*  
Opening ceremony 3 pm Saturday 8th May by Valerie Wynne-Williams

**Who was David Jones ?**

David Jones was born in London of Welsh background. At the age of 14 he went to Camberwell School of Art until he enlisted with the London Welsh Regiment to fight as a private in the First World War. After the war he continued his art training at the Westminster School. In 1921 he became a Roman Catholic and came under the spell of Eric Gill (1882-1940) and his community of art and craft workers at Ditchling, Sussex.

**What is special about his art ?**

Jones was engaged to Gill's daughter Petra from 1924-28 and lived with them in the Black Mountains of Wales. Once in Wales, the land of his forebears, he began to find direction and form in his painting, which is mainly in watercolour. Jones wrote that he was inspired by "*the strong hill rhythms and the bright counter rhythms*" of the surrounding countryside.

From 1925 Jones developed quickly as an artist becoming a member of the Seven and Five group in 1928 where he exhibited with most of the illustrious British artists of the 20th century including Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Ivon Hitchens and Paul Nash.

Jones was a sensitive artist whose work can be seen as part of his spiritual journey through life. This journey was not an easy one and he suffered the first of his breakdowns in 1933. On recovering he took up writing about his experiences in the army and trenches published as "*In Parenthesis*" in 1937. Other works of poetry and prose followed including "*The Anathemata*" published in 1952. Jones did not abandon painting but concentrated on a personal theme of the history of the British Isles told through reflections on the Arthurian legends and the Roman Occupation of Britain and from the 1950s onwards on a sublime series of painted watercolour inscriptions in Latin, English and Welsh.

**The Exhibition. What is its focus ?**

**Mythological Studies**

This show looks at Jones' work from 1940 until his death. It is in this period that Jones fused together his deeply held Christian views with the Romano -Celtic history of the British Isles especially incorporating Welsh Mythology. Only a few paintings remain in private hands.

There are three major Mythological works and some studies from the Estate.

**Chalice paintings**

In 1932 whilst staying with the Gill family at Pigotts in Buckinghamshire, Jones created the

first of his Chalice paintings. Initially conceived as flower paintings on a ledge in front of an open window they later took on mystical significance. When Jones revisited this theme in the early 1950s the backdrop of the window had gone and the objects became symbols for the celebration of the Mass. These are some of the most sought after of all Jones' work and the exhibition includes 4 paintings from two private collections.

### Tree Drawings

Jones suffered a second nervous breakdown in 1947 and whilst convalescing at his new home at Nortwick Park Lodge in Harrow, drew and painted the trees in the grounds of the house. These studies culminated in the celebrated painting of Vexhilla Regis now at Kettles Yard, Cambridge. There are 3 large tree drawings in the exhibition.

### Painted Inscriptions

Although Jones is recorded as having made his first painted inscription in 1932, it is clear that his approach to lettering had developed much earlier. Some of the wood engravings from the Ditchling days incorporate lettering as did the copper engravings of the late 1920s. This form of expression gave way to painting in watercolour his own special form of letters. Letters are irregularly spaced and sized. Colour is used to emphasise certain words and languages are mixed up. The two dimensional space appears to push and pull at the spaces between the letters creating a rhythmic flow that enchants the eye.

Most of these works were made as personal gifts to friends. Texts are drawn from the Bible or other sources that have particular resonance for the event being celebrated or the intended recipient. The exercise of making the inscriptions however was laborious. Many drafts and experiments were carried out for each as Jones was essentially inventing the art form as he went along.

All inscriptions are highly sought after by collectors. All the works in the exhibition are from private collections including that of Valerie Wynne-Williams.

### Girls

A little known aspect of Jones' work are the studies of girls. These were made from 1948 onwards and are often quick sketches with only a few being worked up into finished works. Many depict the women who acted as his muses - Petra Gill, Prudence Pelham and especially Valerie Wynne-Williams. Valerie was a young woman in her early 20s when she met Jones in the late 1950s. Jones fell in love with her and she became the subject of both his mythological studies (viz. Gwener) or of his romantic fantasies (Girl Asleep with Bows and The Three Graces).

### Conclusion

The public will have the opportunity of seeing 40 works none of which have been widely exhibited and covering aspects of Jones' work rarely seen. A few works have been made available for sale by the David Jones Estate.

For further information and images contact Rupert Otten at Monnow Valley Arts Centre