

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Linda Carmen
(London 1910 – 1991)

Portrait of a woman, probably Ithell Colquhoun

Pastel and wash on paper
34 x 24 cm. (13 ½ x 9 ½ in.)

Provenance:
England & Co, London, 1998;
Private Collection;
Roseberys, London, 1 May 2024, lot 215.



Linda Carmen and Ithell Colquhoun met at the Slade, where both graduated in 1931. Carmen's pastel portrait depicts Colquhoun at around this time, or shortly thereafter. With her tightly swept back hair and pencil eyebrows, Colquhoun is instantly recognisable (fig. 1). Colquhoun and Carmen's friendship outlasted the Slade, with the two exhibiting together, alongside other Surrealists, in the 1930s and 1940s.



Fig. 1, Man Ray, *Ithell Colquhoun*, circa 1932, gelatin silver print, 11.1 x 8.1 cm, Centre Pompidou

Whilst at the Slade, Carmen studied under Henry Tonks. Known for his expertise in pastels, Tonks trained many of his students in this demanding medium and his teachings are why numerous British artists of the Interwar years display such mastery of this complex technique. Here Carmen displays her technical proficiency, creating lovely passages of volume and shade with the pastel, mixed with wash. It comes as no surprise that she won the Slade Scholarship twice, first in 1930 and again in 1931.

Though now not nearly as well-known as her friend Colquhoun, Carmen enjoyed a successful career, frequently exhibiting with the Hampstead Artists' Council, the National Society and the Royal Society of British Artists (fig. 2). During the 1950s she made several trips to India, experiences which were to influence her art.

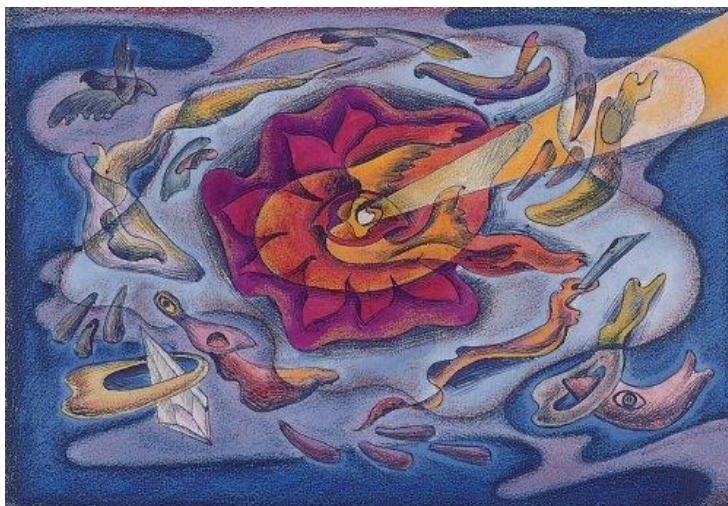


Fig. 2, Linda Carmen, *Untitled (forms orbiting a flower)*, circa 1947, watercolour and pastel on paper, 21 x 29 cm, Private Collection

In 1940 she married John Parry, a banker turned psychologist. Parry was very supportive of Carmen's career, encouraging her to the hallucinatory recesses of the mind. In the 1950s he bought a literary magazine called *Grub Street*, in which Carmen published her first short story. Buoyed by her success in this, she went on to publish three full-length novels, and her obituary in the *Hampstead & Highgate Express* spoke of her primarily as a writer.

Carmen's career was to languish in obscurity until England & Co organised a show of her works in 1998. Though still not a household name, Carmen can now once again be understood as an important, and individual, member of the British Surrealist movement.