

McPhail auction record fleshed out to £20,500

Interest from both trade and private buyers helped set an auction record for **Paul McPhail (b.1966)** at **Sworders' (25% buyer's premium)** latest sale of Modern and Contemporary art.

He studied at Glasgow School of Art in the late 1980s where he met Jenny Saville (b.1970), with whom he later shared a studio in Palermo. The two became close friends, then life partners (they had two children together) and then, more recently, they married.

As the picture offered at Sworders on April 5 demonstrated, McPhail's works were stylistically similar to Saville's and shared a fascination with flesh. *Emollient*, a 5ft x 3ft 6in (1.53 x 1.07m) signed oil on canvas, dated from 1998, four years after the two artists visited a plastic surgeon's operating theatre, witnessing procedures that exposed the fragility of skin.

This large unframed study of a human head shows a face stripped away to reveal the under layers of flesh, blood, muscular structure, gums and bloodshot eyes. The title refers to an oily, moisturising layer applied to the skin.

While Saville has become a major name in the Contemporary art market and her secondary market is now well advanced – her auction record is a whopping £8.25m for the monumental *Propped* that sold at Sotheby's in October 2018 – works by McPhail are comparatively rare at auction.

Therefore, such a large, direct and texturally rich picture, which came from a private UK vendor, was deemed a significant opportunity even if the estimate of £10,000-15,000 was toward the upper end of the previously recorded auction prices for the artist.

With a record €18,000 (£16,360) set by a nude portrait sold at Aguttes in France in October 2020, Sworders' picture again raised the bar for McPhail when it was knocked down at £20,500 to a private Scottish buyer.

Pop Art 'founding member'

The sale also offered a rare work by **Pauline Boty (1938-66)**, a pencil sketch of the artist's husband, Clive Goodwin.

Measuring 9¾ x 8in (25 x 20cm), it dated from

c.1963 and showed the actor, writer, and literary agent reclining in a moment of sleepy repose. It was executed during a period shortly after the couple had married following a whirlwind romance.

Boty is considered a founding member of the early British Pop Art movement and the only female artist in the group.

She was friends with artists such as David Hockney and Peter Blake and, in 1961, participated in a group show titled *Blake, Boty, Porter, Reeve*. Her first solo exhibition was held at the Grabowski Gallery, Chelsea, in 1963.

The fact that she died of cancer aged just 28 means fewer than 100 works are thought to have survived. While a number of exhibitions have focused on her works since 2013, commercially she was brought to the fore when a sensational £520,000 was bid for her painting *Bum* at Christie's in 2017.

The current work was not in the same league but did have a lot in its favour. It was drawn with the clean, solid lines characteristic of British Pop Art and was an attractively spontaneous and intimate sketch. It had previously been part of Clive Goodwin's estate when he died in 1978 and had featured in a show at The Mayor Gallery, London, in 2009. Estimated at £2000-3000, it sold at £5500 to a UK collector.

Pakistani creations

Elsewhere at the Sworders sale, a small group of works by modern Pakistani artists was led by two typically colourful Abstracts by **Ahmed Parvez (1926-79)**. A member of The Lahore Group in Pakistan, he spent around a decade in London during his early career and part of his later career in New York, although he was based in Karachi during other times.

The two works here came from a private UK vendor whose family purchased them in Pakistan in the 1970s.

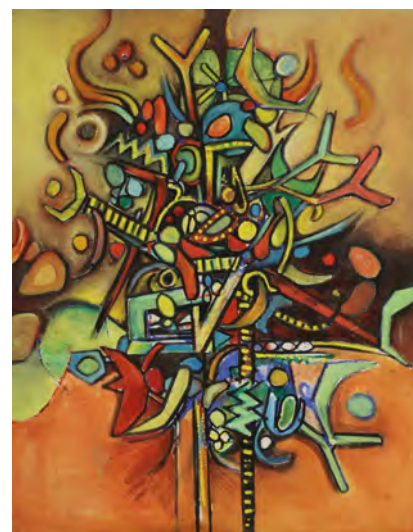
They were similarly sized untitled oils on canvas and both were pitched at £3000-5000. They each sold for £7000 to the trade; above-average sums for the artist judging by previous auction results in the UK.



Left: *Emollient* by Paul McPhail – **£20,500** at Sworders.



Left: *The artist's husband* by Pauline Boty – **£5500**.



Left: a 2ft 6in x 2ft (76 x 61cm) untitled oil on canvas by Ahmed Parvez, one of two works by the artist that sold for **£7000**.



Artist Lynch keeps it real

Not all Contemporary art has to be either abstract or wacky. **James Lynch (b.1956)** paints landscapes and wildlife pictures and has even mastered the medieval technique of egg tempera painting. His work is yet to appear much at auction but one watercolour and gouache titled *Gaggle of Geese* emerged at **Cotswold Auction Company (22% buyer's premium)** on January 25.

Depictions of geese are a popular part of his oeuvre and this 17¾in x 2ft 3in (45 x 69cm) picture which had been purchased at an exhibition at the Maas Gallery in London looked an attractive proposition against a £1000-1500 pitch.

Selling at **£2300**, the sum was in the top 10 auction prices for the artist even though it was some way behind the £13,000 record for *Boxing Hares*, a tempera on panel that sold at Sotheby's in 2016.