

**SHEILA FELL – TALENTED, TENACIOUS AND TRAGIC  
A UNIQUE LOAN EXHIBITION AT OFFER WATERMAN & CO  
8-29 OCTOBER 2010**



*Heavy Snow II* by Sheila Fell, 1979, oil on canvas, 28x36ins. © Anna Fell.

A unique loan exhibition of rarely seen works by Sheila Fell, who was a key figure among the talented generation of post-war British painters but who died tragically young, is to be held from **8–29 October 2010 at Offer Waterman & Co**, 11 Langton Street, London SW10. **Sheila Fell**, with two dozen paintings loaned by private collectors, will be the first exhibition of this powerful Cumbrian artist's pictures in London for 20 years and will coincide with the publication of the first-ever comprehensive book on her life and work. *Sheila Fell, A Passion for Paint* by Cate Haste draws on hitherto unpublished letters and diaries and interviews with contemporaries and friends including the artists Frank Auerbach, the late Craigie Aitchison and Sir Peter Blake.

Among the pictures exhibited in *Sheila Fell* will be the striking *Heavy Snow II*, completed shortly before her death aged 48 in 1979; *Skiddaw*, her most reproduced work, painted in 1964; and *Potato Field, Cumberland I*, dating from 1974, a brooding depiction of a Cumbrian agricultural scene. It is appropriate that these and other privately-owned paintings rarely on show to the public are being exhibited at Offer Waterman & Co, one of London's leading dealers in Modern British art. The gallery has long specialised in works by Auerbach and other contemporaries of Sheila Fell who knew her well. Auerbach has written the foreword to Haste's biography paying tribute to Fell's "fervent and adventurous life which was all too short".

# CAWDELL DOUGLAS

## P R E S S R E L E A S E

Sheila Fell's life was indeed both fervent and adventurous and took her on a passionate and complex journey from a secure, working-class childhood to the bohemian art world of 1950s and 1960s London. Born to a thrifty mining family in rural Cumberland to whom the art world was entirely foreign, she was determined to paint and, after passing the entrance exam to St Martin's School of Art, Fell arrived in London in September 1950. Her beauty won her many admirers but behind her attractive appearance lay a strong will, a clear mind and a tenacious loyalty to her Cumbrian roots. This potent combination of looks, intelligence and artistic talent enabled her to slip quickly into the colourful and vibrant world of Soho where artists and writers such as Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and Dylan Thomas held sway. The art critic David Sylvester admired Fell's work and his support led to her becoming the youngest artist ever to have a solo exhibition at the Beaux Arts Gallery in London.



*Skiddaw 1964* by Sheila Fell, oil on canvas, 28x36ins. © Anna Fell.

The Beaux Arts show brought Fell to the attention of L.S. Lowry, who immediately declared her to be the best landscape painter of the age and helped by providing her with an allowance. He went to meet her parents in the village of Aspatria in Cumbria and from then on spent his annual holidays with them. He and Fell went on all-day painting exhibitions together and their friendship lasted until his death in 1976. "Knowing him changed my life", she said later. "Had it not been for him, I think I would have just gone down." Like Lowry, she remained firmly attached to her roots and almost all her work depicts Cumbrian scenes. Her other fierce loyalty was to painting itself, defying the tide of fashion that threatened to marginalize it and she became one of the few women artists to achieve national recognition in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1974 she became one of the youngest painters ever to be elected a Royal Academician.

# CAWDELL DOUGLAS

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P R E S S   R E L E A S E

Fell's private life was highly unconventional. She had a daughter Anna by the Greek sculptor Takis Vassilakis but named her friend Clifford Rowan as the father and it was years before the truth emerged. She stayed in touch with Takis, as he was always known, but continued to live with Rowan until 1961 when they swapped partners with a German couple. Bruno Dammann remained with Fell for the rest of her life but the deaths of both her father Jack and Lowry within a fortnight in 1976, the unresolved split between her Cumbrian roots and her London life and the loneliness of painting began to take their toll. Fell's drinking bouts increased and on 15 December 1979 she died accidentally in her flat in London. British art had lost one of the finest painters of the post-war era.

***Sheila Fell, A Passion for Paint* by Cate Haste** will be published by Lund Humphries. Hardback, 136 pages with 80 colour and 30 black and white illustrations. Price:£35. ISBN: 978-0-85331-979-5.

**About the author:** Cate Haste is a writer of political memoirs and works of historical non-fiction. She has a personal connection to Cumbria and a reputation for writing vividly and accessibly about female figures.

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**Offer Waterman & Co.**  
11 Langton Street  
London SW10 0JL  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7351 0068  
The gallery is open Monday to Friday 10am to 6.30pm, Saturdays 11am to 4pm.

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