Convalescent

Gilbert Spencer (1892-1979)

REF:

Description

Oil on CanvasSigned & dated 1964 (lower right)36 x 67 cms (14 x 26 ins)
Gilbert Spencer was born at Fernley Villa, Cookham, Berkshire on 4th August 1892.He was the eighth son and youngest of eleven children of father, William Spencer, organist and music teacher and mother, Anna Caroline Slack, who were married in 1873, in Cookham. Gilbert's brother, the artist Stanley Spencer was just 13 months older than him. The family had very little spare money so formal education for Gilbert did not start until he was 16 when he briefly attended a private school in Maidenhead. During his childhood within his musical family, he spent much time observing nature, making wooden models of farm carts and living and observing rural village life.His early years had a great influence on his life as a painter of landscapes, portraits, figure compositions and mural decorations. He worked in oils and watercolour, mostly on landscape vistas of Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Dorset and the Lake District.From 1911-1912, Gilbert studied at the Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts and the Royal College of Art which included wood carving. In 1913 – 1915 he joined his brother Stanley at the Slade School of Fine Art under the tutelage of Henry Tonks who remained a great influence throughout his life. He won the coveted life drawing prize in 1914 and was the runner-up for the summer competition prize with a huge mural "The seven ages of man", now at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Canada. With the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, Gilbert's career was interrupted until 1919 when he was to return to the Slade with a scholarship for another year. He left an unfinished work "Sashes Meadow" before he went to war, which was later acquired by the Tate.As pacifists, both Gilbert and Stanley served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, initially at the Beaufort War Hospital, Bristol, after which Gilbert was drafted to the Macedonian front serving in Salonika and the Eastern Mediterranean from 1915-1919. His painting from this period "New Arrivals: F4 Ward, No. 36, Stationary Hospital, Mahemdia, Senai" hangs in the Imperial War Museum. These war years would have influenced this much later work, "Convalescent" 1974 in terms of sheet changing, iron beds of the era, plus other notable works of curtained windows during Gilbert's career.In 1919, he became a member of the New English Club, meeting Hilda Carline, his brother's future wife and her brother Sydney. In 1922, he became an Art Master at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford and Sydney Carline asked Gilbert to join his staff at the University. Lady Ottoline Morrell found him a room in the village of Garsington. Her home was Garsington Manor which was frequented by many illustrious guests including the Bloomsbury set. He painted "Trees at Garsington", "Garsington rooftops" and "the sheep fold at Upper Farm" during this period.In 1923, Gilbert Spencer had his first solo exhibition at the Goupil Gallery, London. In 1930, he was appointed to the staff of the Royal College of Art by the artist Sir William Rothenstein and during this year, he married Ursula Bradshaw, a former Ruskin pupil. The artist John Nash (brother ...