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EILEEN ROSEMARY MAYO

British, Australian, New Zealander 1906 -1994

Sea Holly

Tempera on board 41 x 33

Signed

Signed & inscribed on original artist's label affixed verso

ESTIMATE

\$25,000 - 35,000

PROVENANCE

Collection of Sir Edward Beddington - Behrens 1897 - 1968

& his wife Princess Irena Obolensky

Private Collection, Auckland by descent



Sea Holly is presented in its original frame which bears this label verso

Sea Holly is one of the finest paintings by Dame Eileen Mayo to be offered for sale. It features a surrealist portrayal of sea holly in flower on a sandy shore with a backdrop of sky and ocean. When painted, Mayo was studying at Academie Montmartre, Paris under Ferdinand Léger. This work is the original egg tempera painting reproduced as a Christmas card by the Medici Society, London. The National Library of New Zealand holds a copy of the card in its collection.

Widely acclaimed in London in the twenties, Eileen Mayo was a strikingly beautiful young woman who initially supplemented her income by modeling for some of the leading artists of the time including Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. She studied design at the Slade School and Central School of Arts and Crafts. Instructed in lino cutting by Claude Flight, Mayo was invited to participate in *The Second Exhibition of British Linocuts* at the Redfern Gallery. Kenneth Clark described her designs as 'outstandingly good' and her entries from 1930 to 1934 were acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum. She enjoyed a very successful career as an illustrator and contributor to publications such as *Art News & Reviews*. Mayo was one of the few British artists using egg tempera in the forties. While this choice of medium meant sacrificing the family egg ration for the essential albumen, it was the ideal vehicle to showcase her original and technically brilliant work.

After extensive travels Mayo returned to London in 1936 to study under Henry Moore and Robert Medley at the Chelsea Polytechnic. By 1946 she had works in both the Royal Academy and the Arts Council touring exhibition, and had completed further books on animals for Pleiades Books.

In 1952 she settled in Australia with the intention of being closer to her mother and sister who had emigrated to New Zealand in 1921. Inspired by the natural history of the southern hemisphere she taught, exhibited and was commissioned by both Qantas and the New South Wales Tourist Board. In 1962 she crossed the Tasman to live in New Zealand while still carrying out Australian commissions for stamp and decimal coinage design. At the invitation of the New Zealand Treasury Mayo completed several commissions for first-day covers and stamps, including the Captain Cook bicentenary stamps in 1969 and for the Unicef and Antarctic Treaty anniversaries. Mayo's print making continued unabated, and she continued to exhibit internationally. Mayo lived in Christchurch, teaching at the University of Canterbury until 1972. For more than three years she worked on an underwater diorama with Otago Museum. In 1994, one week before her death at the age of 87, she was created a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

