



JOHN NASH (1893-1977)

Hamden House Park

c.1935

Oil on canvas
86.2 x 68.8cm

Signed 'John Nash' lower left

PROVENANCE

Christie's, South Kensington, 3 June 1999, lot 162;
Private Collection;
Woolley & Wallis, Salisbury, 4 June 2025, lot 475;
Philip Mould & Company, London, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE

Roderick Jones, (1979) *John Nash: Paintings and Watercolours*. MPhil thesis, Sheffield City Polytechnic, pp. 107-108, 111, 182, [as 'Hamden House Park'].

PHILIP MOULD
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& COMPANY



Painted in the Buckinghamshire countryside that John Nash knew intimately, *Hampden House Park* occupies an important position in the development of his interwar landscapes. Nash was, by temperament as much as profession, a countryman, and his art was rooted in prolonged observation of the rural landscape and its changing forms.

The significance of this painting was recognised by Roderick Jones in his pioneering 1979 thesis on Nash. Although Jones's catalogue records the picture then of unknown whereabouts, in his discussion of the artist's work he dates it circa 1935 and treats it as the beginning of a renewed period of experimentation. On *Hampden House Park*, he writes, Nash "*reactivates the more radical landscape painting of the 1920s.*" Jones draws particular attention to the intriguing "dislocations" within the painting, such as the centrally placed copse, which divides the upper part of the composition into two distinct zones, creating a slightly surreal atmosphere. Nash uses the tall, upright canvas to make the trees the principal architecture of the picture. Their narrow trunks form a dense screen through its centre and beyond them, the attenuated branches of the park trees are set starkly against the sky.[1]

The foreground is more unusual, depicting a broken bank of vivid reddish earth and dark shrubbery. Nash was interested in the reality of the countryside, rather than purely its picturesque possibilities – his chosen subjects were often ponds, gravel pits, tree stumps and other irregularities in the landscape. Andrew Lambirth, in *John Nash: Artist & Countryman*, explores Nash's preference for "*an intimate landscape ... preferring to focus on the shapes of things in the foreground and mid-ground*".[2] The exposed bank in the present work is a

particularly striking example of this tendency, brought firmly into the viewer's space, toying with conventional recession. Indeed, recent scholarship has emphasised the importance of pattern and the underlying geometry of Nash's landscapes, and these foregrounded details enabled him to test new arrangements of rhythm, line and colour.

Nash had lived at Lane End, Meadle, near Princes Risborough, since the early 1920s, and the fields, woods and folded ground of the Chilterns remained among his most persistent subjects and Hampden House, at Great Hampden, lay only a few miles away. The painting therefore belongs to the deeply familiar geography from which Nash drew some of his most sustained and inventive responses to landscape.

Long overshadowed by his brother Paul, John Nash has been reassessed substantially in recent years, notably in Lambirth's *John Nash: Artist & Countryman* (2019), Andy Friend's *John Nash: The Landscape of Love and Solace* (2020), and the major Towner Eastbourne and Compton Verney retrospective of 2021–22. That scholarship has emphasised both the originality of his vision and the degree to which his ostensibly traditional landscapes depend upon a markedly modern mindset. *Hampden House Park* is an unusually clear demonstration of these qualities and, as Jones recognised nearly fifty years ago, marks a moment when Nash's landscape painting became markedly more adventurous.

[1] Roderick Jones (1979), *John Nash: Paintings and Watercolours*. Unpublished MPhil thesis, Sheffield City Polytechnic, p. 107.

[2] Andrew Lambirth (2019), *John Nash: Artist & Countryman*. Norwich: Unicorn Press, p.271.