

MacDiarmid Arts Trust

Banana Plantation, Guadeloupe 1977

Douglas MacDiarmid, expatriate New Zealand painter, Paris 1922-August 2020

Pastel on paper, framed

38 x 27cm

Signed 'MacDiarmid'. Painted in France.

Dunbar Sloane Affordable Art & Studio Ceramics auction catalogue, Wellington, Wednesday 21 October 2020.

Lot 74, estimated to fetch \$300-\$600.

The butterfly-shaped island of Guadeloupe sits between Puerto Rico and Martinique in the southern Caribbean Sea. It is French offshore territory, largely populated by a Créole culture of people from African slave origin.

Douglas' life partner Patrick' grew up on the island, before moving to mainland France to find more opportunity as a young man. The banana grove in this painting was probably first sketched from the doorway of a little cottage the pair built in Patrick's home village of Baillif, next door to his mother's house, as their winter retreat.

From his first visit in 1971, Douglas loved the energy and communal chaos of life in these beautiful tropical surroundings. It was the perfect escape from the pressure and pollution of big city life. Baillif quickly became his "decompression chamber" between France and New Zealand.

He painted many Caribbean pictures in the 1970s, fascinated by the spontaneity of the people, the luminous colours and intensity of light. Twenty-seven paintings were first exhibited at New Zealand House, London in October 1976, then in Paris the following year. A number of Guadeloupe paintings were later shown in New Zealand and remain in public and private ownership there.

It is likely that MacDiarmid brought this pastel to New Zealand for a solo exhibition at Centre Gallery, Wellington in August, 1980.

Bananas, incidentally, are essential to the economy of Guadeloupe. Not only as a valuable food and fibre source for the local population but as their biggest agricultural export. Bunches from the island are much sought after by city foodies in France for their large size and flavour.

Information prepared by

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Biographer | *Colours of a Life: The life and times of Douglas MacDiarmid* (Mary Egan Publishing, 2018)

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