

For Immediate Release: April 2022



## Jewish Holocaust survivor and London emigre artist of the 1960s to show in Camden in May

### Dante Elsner – *The Work*

Exhibition runs: 12-16<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Private View: Weds 11<sup>th</sup> May 6-8pm**  
**Director's Welcome: 7pm**

In May, The Noble Sage, in association with Jewish Book Week, will be holding an exhibition of the drawings and paintings of the late Polish, Jewish-born London artist, Dante Elsner (1920-1997). The exhibition of 23 works from his family's private collection will be an introduction to this remarkable painter that dedicated his life in London to a new spiritual artistic practise.

Dante Elsner's fascinating story begins in Krakow, Poland, where he was born to a middle class liberal Jewish family. His parents had hoped for a medical career for Dante when the Second World War broke out in 1939 and they had to flee to the Russian side of divided Poland. When Hitler broke his pact with Stalin in 1941, Nazi occupation proved too dangerous for the family. The next year, Elsner's father and brother and then his mother were rounded up and taken to the Sobibor and Belzec Death Camps. Elsner miraculously escaped and for two years lived on instinct alone in the forest. Traumatized by what he had been through, and yet indebted to 'his inner voice' that had saved him, Elsner found his way to Krakow to study fine art. When, again, Poland began to be unstable, Elsner left for Paris.

In Paris, the artist lived in extreme poverty in an attic room with no heating or running water. He ate in soup kitchens to survive, taking odd jobs wherever he could and using any money he made to produce art. When he ran out of canvases he would paint on his shirts. Whilst in Paris, on the brink of suicide, it was often his visits to the museums that gave him courage. He was introduced to the teachings of the Armenian mystic, G.I. Gurdjieff, who described a new spiritual route for one's

life described as *The Work*: an exploration of human existence for the evolution of man to deeper states of attention, alertness and vision. This was the framework Elsner had been looking for to make sense of his 'inner voice'.

Having married, Elsner moved to Queen's Park in London in 1958 and soon after began to receive reparations from the German government for loss in the war. Now financially independent, Elsner dedicated his life to the artistic spiritual journeying of *The Work*. Inspired by the diverse spiritualities of South East Asia, Elsner forged a new practice of watercolour and ink brush painting in a scroll format modelled on Japanese and Chinese art. He believed that every brushstroke was immediately a reflection of its maker's state of mind and a pure reflection of the spiritual path.

A Private View to celebrate the exhibition will be held on Weds 11<sup>th</sup> May, 6-8pm. This Private View will be open to all to attend. The gallery however kindly asks that you RSVP to [info@thenoblesage.com](mailto:info@thenoblesage.com) with your name and number of guests for Covid safety. Alternatively, there will be daily tours with The Noble Sage's Director, Jana Manuelpillai, and other related events. Contact the gallery on [info@thenoblesage.com](mailto:info@thenoblesage.com) for further information.

#### Exhibition Listings

Dante Elsner – *The Work*  
The Noble Sage in association with Jewish Book Week  
11-16<sup>th</sup> May 2022, 11-6pm daily  
@ Camden Image Gallery, 174 Royal College St, London NW1 0SP

All artworks for sale  
For an early or private viewing of the works, contact the gallery on 07901944997

#### Private View

Weds 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022, 6-8pm  
Director's Welcome – 7pm  
RSVP: [info@thenoblesage.com](mailto:info@thenoblesage.com)

#### Contact Details

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