



MACCONNAL - MASON

ESTABLISHED 1893



Helen Layfield Bradley (1900 - 1979)

Oh Look George, Father Christmas isn't really Father Christmas

Signed with a fly insignia, lower right; also signed, inscribed and dated 1969 on a label attached to the reverse

Oil on board

20 x 36 in – 50.8 x 91.4 cm

Frame size

26¼ x 42 in – 66.7 x 106.7 cm

inscribed on artists label on reverse

“Oh George look Father Christmas isn't really Father Christmas but Mr Thornley”. How sad we felt when we saw him standing at the schoolroom door shouting at the top of his voice, “Fetch my cane, Willie Murgatroyd and get off the table Sam Wilkins”. It was a dreadful school party. Two of the teachers were ill, so Aunt Frances asked Mother to help and bring us along (also Gyp and Barney), but we couldn't stop Willie Murgatroyd and Sam Wilkins from fighting and Annie urging them on. One little girl came to Mother and said “Please Miss, our Billy's wet his pants and I feel sick”. “Frances”, called Mother, “what do we do with her” she may be beginning with something... and that was Christmas 1906”.

Literature:

Helen Bradley, *And Miss Carter Wore Pink*, Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1971, p.30, illustrated in colour

Artist description:

Helen Bradley was born in Lees, a village outside the industrial cotton town of Oldham. She was born just prior to the Edwardian era, a golden age, when Britain was the envy of the world, a confident wealthy superpower.

She began to paint only in her sixties in order to show her young granddaughter what life was like when she herself was a child. It was a time of prosperity and the extended family and her 'naïve' narrative paintings reflect this. Her works are documents of social history, always accompanied by a detailed description (see above), recording social conventions, costume, lifestyle, and portraying the growing

urban sprawl. Whether she portrays an outing to Blackpool, a trip to Manchester, a day at the fair or carol singing in the snow, her paintings are full of familiar characters, Miss Carter, who always wore pink, the Aunts, and Mr Taylor the Bank Manager. Many of her works are illustrated in a series of autobiographical books, the first of which is "And Miss Carter Wore Pink, Scenes from an Edwardian Childhood", published Jonathan Cape, London 1971. Bradley's work was much admired by L. S. Lowry (1887-1976) and can be compared to that of the American artist, a contemporary, Grandma Moses (1860-1961).

Her works can be found in museums in: Oldham; Saddleworth and Salford.