# Basic Detail Report



## Thornhead (recto); Head of Christ (verso)

**Date**
1946

**Primary Maker**
Graham Sutherland

**Medium**
Double-sided painting: ink and gouache (recto); gouache (verso) on board

**Description**
Although the trauma suggested by Graham Sutherland's "Thornhead" may be related to World War II, from which England was just emerging at the time of its creation, the artist had actually formulated the theme years earlier. After noticing thornbushes against the sky, he conceived of a series of "Thorn Heads" in which "a sort of pricking and demarcation of a hollow head shaped space [would be] enclosed by the points." Sutherland's work was often inspired by the natural world, and many of his paintings began as sketches directly from nature. In addition to its natural source, Thornhead resonates with religious significance. It was made in the same year Sutherland painted a large Crucifixion for Saint Matthew's Church in Northampton, England. On the back of "Thornhead", perpendicular to the composition on the front, is a study for a Crucifixion showing a crown of thorns set atop Jesus Christ's head. At the time, the artist wrote, "My mind became preoccupied with the idea of thorns (the crown of thorns) and wounds made by thorns." It is not surprising that he would paint his subject on wood rather than canvas or that he would reuse the panel for another painting, given the shortage of materials after the war. This work was donated to Hamilton College by William G. Roehrick, Class of 1934, H1971, in memory of Duncan and Marjorie Phillips, founders of the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, who served on the advisory committee to the Root Art Center. Roehrick lent the painting to an exhibition of works by Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore held at the Phillips Collection in 1953 and presented it to the Emerson Gallery in 1991 (SOURCE: Katherine Alcauskas, Innovative Approaches, Honored Traditions, exh. cat.)

**Dimensions**
Overall: 13 1/2 × 11 1/2 in. (34.3 × 29.2 cm)