



SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL (1874-1965)

Lake Near Breccles in Autumn

oil on canvas

22 x 29 in. (28 1/2 x 36 x 3 in.)

c. 1930

17468

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection of the family of the late Julian Sandys

EXHIBITION:

Millennium Gate Museum, Atlanta, Georgia
Washington St Louis University, St Louis, Missouri
National Churchill Museum, Fulton, Missouri
RMS Queen Mary, Long Beach, California
Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan
Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach, Florida

LITERATURE:

"Sir Winston Churchill: His Life and His Paintings" by David Coombs with Minnie Churchill, Forward by Mary Soames. Running Press, Philadelphia/London. Pegasus Publishing, 2003. Page 70, fig. 114

Widely known as the greatest statesman of the 20th century, the savior of Western civilization, and a Nobel Prize winner, Sir Winston Churchill was also an avid painter.

Churchill was age 40 when he began to paint — at one of the lowest moments of his life. It was June 1915, shortly after his forced resignation as First Lord of the Admiralty following the disastrous Dardanelles campaign. One Sunday afternoon, his sister-in-law Lady Gwendoline handed him a paintbrush belonging to his young nephew. In his 1921 essay "Painting as a Pastime" Churchill recalled, "And then it was that the Muse of Painting came to my rescue." Painting provided a refuge from the stresses of politics and journalism, and from what Churchill called "the black dog" of depression. Moreover, Churchill saw painting as a testing ground for leadership strengths such as audacity, humility, foresight, and strength of memory.

He was inspired by the Impressionists and enjoyed painting en plein air. And wherever he went — on vacation or for work — Churchill was accompanied by his paints, brushes, canvases, and an easel. His medium of choice was oil, and his preferred subjects were landscapes and seascapes. His approximately 550 canvases — or his "daubs" as he called them — tell the story of his travels across Europe, North America, and North Africa. "Lake Near Breccles in Autumn" (c. 1930) depicts a landscape closer to home and recalls the broad brushstrokes of the Impressionists he admired.

Widely known as the greatest statesman of the 20th century and the savior of Western civilization, a Nobel Prize winner, and the subject of a recent Academy Award-nominated film, more people than ever are taking an interest in Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965). Yet few are aware that he was an avid painter.

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According to Duncan Sandys, a great-grandson of Winston Churchill and son of Julian Sandys, “Although painting was just a hobby, Churchill learned new skills which he used in his political and diplomatic life. It gave him a sanctuary during adversity and, I believe, made him more effective in 1940 as Hitler prepared to invade Britain.”

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Churchill was largely self-taught as a painter although his style was developed through mentoring from friends and accomplished painters such as Sir Oswald Birley, Sir John and Lady (Hazel) Lavery, Paul Maze, Sir William Nicholson, and Walter Sickert. He visited museums and galleries to study great works, and copied paintings by Charles Daubigny, John Singer Sargent, and Paul Cézanne.

Throughout his life Churchill was always modest about the quality of his work. In 1921 he sent five paintings under an assumed name (Charles Morin) to an exhibition at the Galerie Druet in Paris. In 1947 he again employed a pseudonym (David Winter) when submitting two works to London’s Royal Academy of Arts for its summer exhibition — his true name revealed only after the two were accepted. He received further recognition as an artist when the Royal Academy elected him an Honorary Academician Extraordinary in 1948, and held a solo exhibition of his works that toured internationally in 1958-59 — the institution’s first and only exhibition of an amateur artist.

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