

DUKE STREET GALLERY

INFORMATION SHEET



JOHN PIPER C.H. (1903–1992)
HARLAXTON MANOR, LINCOLNSHIRE

Materials

Oil on Canvas, Signed
42" x 72"

Exhibited:

London, Marlborough Fine Art.

John Piper, Victorian Dreams, Palaces and Other Buildings in Landscape, 1977, Illustrated in Catalogue, No.1

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John Piper 1903-1992

Born in Epsom in 1903, the son of a solicitor, John Piper was educated at Epsom College and joined the family firm as an articled clerk. However, upon his father's death in 1925, the young John Piper gave up the study of law and turned to painting via the Richmond School of Art. From there he transferred to the Royal College of Art in 1927.

Henry Moore, who taught there, was a great influence on the young Piper and persuaded him to join the Slade in 1930. There he met Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth and became deeply absorbed in the abstract movement. He was strengthened in this direction by a visit to Paris in 1933 where he met Braque, Brancusi, Leger and Helion.

In 1940 Piper volunteered for the Royal Air Force but was instead commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee and by 1944 he was appointed an official war artist. It was his introduction in the late 1930s to the theatre and stage that caused him to turn his back on abstractionism and instead revert to realism. His representational, but highly romanticised landscapes were but a short step to stage design; and another step into the design of stained glass, tapestry and ceramics.

During World War II John Piper depicted the devastation of English cities by enemy bomb damage; of great houses fallen into decay and abandoned churches. These he composed with dramatic effect and theatrical lighting, giving the feeling of a stage set. His passion for architecture was nurtured by his close personal and professional relationship with Sir John Betjeman with whom he collaborated on the series of Shell Guides to the British Isles.

Piper also found the time to be a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, serving for nineteen years. He also became a trustee of both the National and Tate Galleries. Whilst writing for the Architectural Review, Piper met and became great friends with Benjamin Britten and they worked together on several musical productions. A boundless talent for every type of artistic expression, John Piper's works are to be found in most major museums the British Isles, and he features in many of the finest private collections of contemporary British Art throughout the world.

He died at the age of eighty nine leaving a vast wealth of artistic treasures that have become an integral part of our heritage.