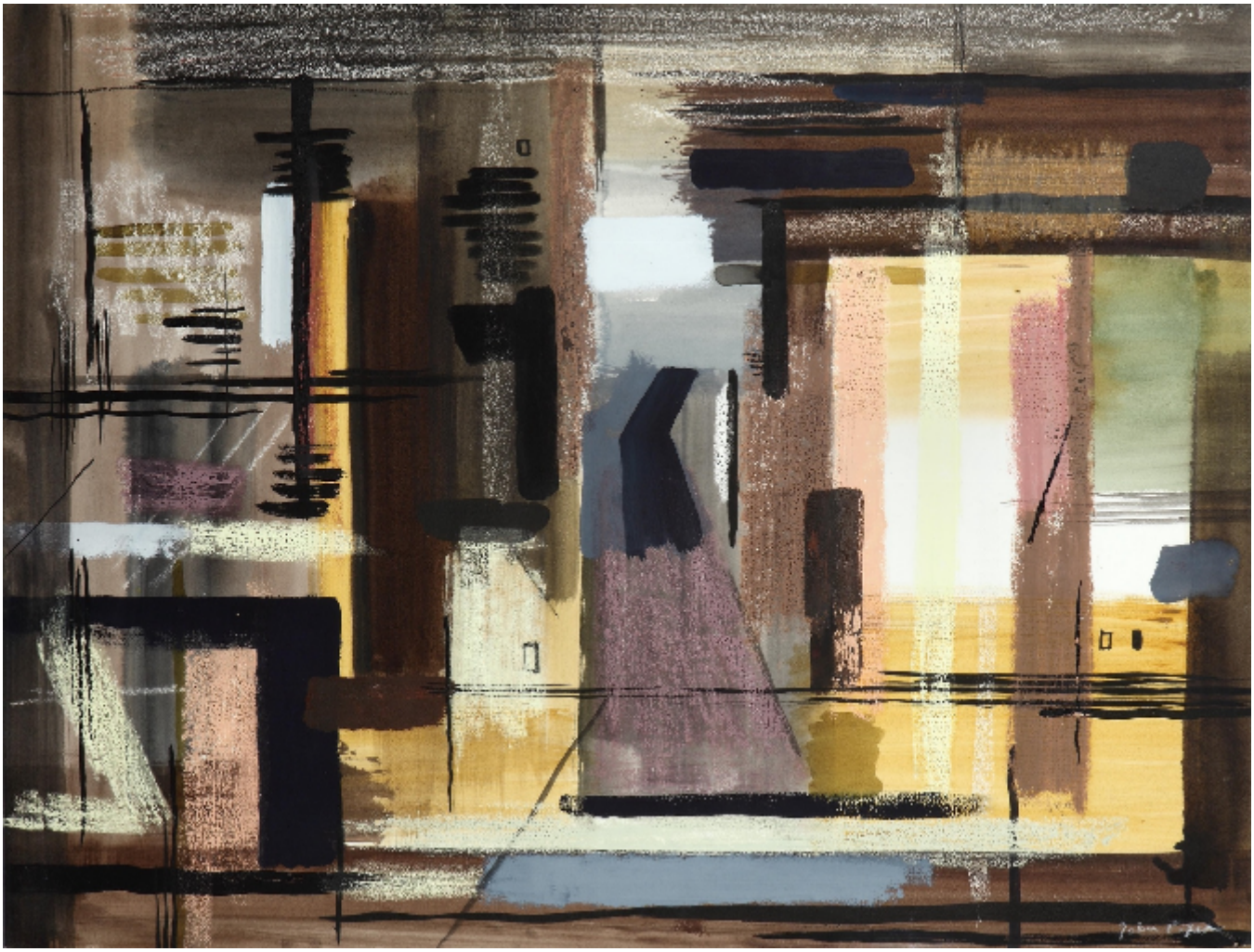
John Piper, Abstract, Landscape, Tetbury, 1957, Watercolor, Gouache, Pastel

John Piper CH

Sold



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REF: 11136

Height: 78 cm (30.7")

Width: 96 cm (37.8")

Depth: 2 cm (0.8")

Description

JOHN PIPER (British,1903-1992) : Tetbury Signed 'John Piper' (lower right) Ink, watercolor, gouache and pastel Executed in 1957 PROVENANCE : Save & Prosper collection, deaccessioned in 2001, label verso (Sotheby's, Lot 169, 4 July 2001)

Sheet: Height Length In an ebonised, moulded frame Frame: Height 78 cm, 30 1/2 in. Length 96 cm, 38 in

Tetbury is a large, rich work on paper where John Piper, one of England's greatest 20th century painters, has used a variety of media from ink to watercolour and pastel to evoke the view of the village from the Bath Road (the catalogue sheet includes the actual photograph) but the use of abstraction has simplified the image to a few identifiable elements (the Bath Road, the church spire, the telegraph pole).

Tetbury is significant for its scale (Height 57 cm., 22 ½ in x Length 76 cm., 30 in.), for its strong composition, and also for the highly finished surface, both unusual in a work on paper. Piper uses a wide vocabulary of textures and the subtle use of wax resist to give a stippled effect through layers of colour is particularly interesting. Tetbury shows off Piper's mastery of the media as well his ability to distill a landscape or a view into a highly structured, nearly abstract, composition.

Tetbury is an excellent example of Piper's practice in the 1950s where he achieves a balance between the topographical landscape tradition and the revolutionary elements that European abstraction. In addition, Tetbury displays influences from Piper's work on stained glass commissions (at the time he produced Tetbury he was working on commissions for the Coventry Cathedral and Oundle College in Rutland). In Tetbury this is manifest in the jewel-tones of the palette, the geometrical awareness of the whole, and in the use of strong black lines and marks as punctuation.

Tetbury is an exceptional example of Piper's mature abstract style realised several decades after his early period of abstraction in the inter-war period. Piper was one of the early advocates of abstraction in Britain and whilst he later continued a more figurative practice, he continuously experimented with certain aspects of abstraction. Piper was never interested in a slavish application of abstraction and 'Tetbury' is a perfect example of his practice of combining abstraction with the naturalistic landscape British tradition (Piper has been associated to the English neo-Romantics together with Sutherland and Nash among others). This practice is best understood when one looks at a contemporary picture of Tetbury that is more figurative (image also included in the Catalogue sheet). This other picture can be seen as intermediary stage through which Piper works in order to reveal the level of abstraction and complexity of composition of the present work.

Tetbury is a strong picture in terms of technical mastery as well as composition and it showcases the ability of Piper to produce a masterpiece illustrating how abstraction can help revive the well-established tradition of topographical landscapes

DESCRIPTI0N : This work is one of a series of abstracted topographical landscapes completed by Piper in the late 1950s, the same period that he was working on stained glass commi...

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