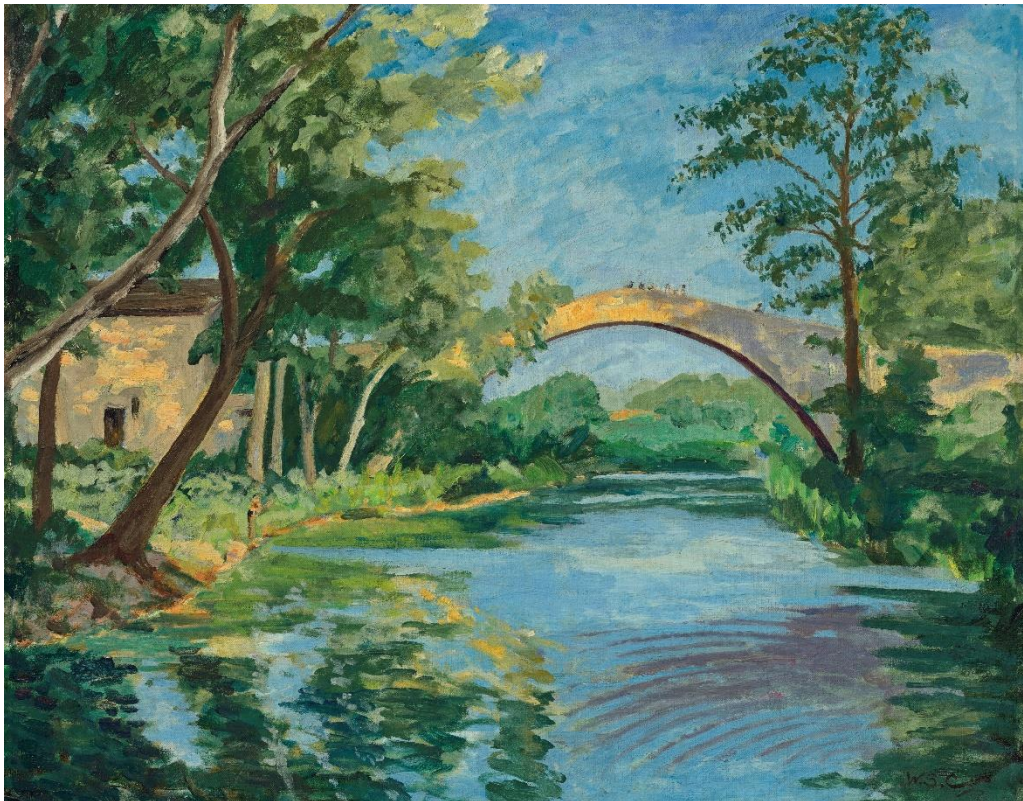


CHRISTIE'S

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SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL'S *THE BRIDGE AT AIX EN PROVENCE* WILL BE OFFERED AT AUCTION FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE MODERN BRITISH ART EVENING SALE ON 20 OCTOBER 2021

- Sir Winston Churchill's *The Bridge at Aix en Provence* (1948) was originally gifted to Willy Sax, the Swiss paint manufacturer who supplied Churchill with all of his paint materials
- *The Bridge at Aix en Provence* depicts a view in the South of France painted twice by Paul Cézanne: *Baigneuses sous un pont* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *Le Pont des Trois Sautets* (Cincinnati Art Museum)
- At Churchill's request, Sax created two paint hues that were named after the former British Prime Minister
- Christie's Modern British Art Evening Sale will be a live auction, taking place on 20 October 2021 at 7pm



Sir Winston Churchill, *The Bridge at Aix en Provence* (1948, estimate: £1,500,000-2,500,000)

LONDON – *The Bridge at Aix en Provence* (1948, estimate: £1,500,000-2,500,000) by Sir Winston Churchill will highlight Christie's Modern British Art Evening Auction on 20 October 2021, a key auction in the 20th / 21st Century October Season, which encompasses sales in both London and Paris. The painting was originally gifted to the Swiss paint manufacturer Willy Sax who supplied Churchill with his artistic

materials and would become a lifelong friend. Churchill had already been using oil paint produced by Sax Farben, a family run paint manufacturer just outside of Zurich, when the pair formed an incredibly strong bond after their first meeting in Switzerland in September 1946. The resulting close relationship ensued for the rest of their lives. The scene depicted in *The Bridge at Aix en Provence* would have been especially appealing to Churchill, not only due to his love of painting water, but also because this particular vista was also visited by one of the most important artists of the 20th Century, Paul Cézanne, who inspired Churchill. Trois Sautets, which translates as ‘three small jumps’, is an elegant bridge that arches over the River Arc. In the last year of his life, Cézanne produced two watercolours of the scene, *Baigneuses sous un pont* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *Le Pont des Trois Sautets* (Cincinnati Art Museum). In 1948, Willy Sax and the Swiss artist Charles Montag visited Churchill in the South of France, where he painted *The Bridge at Aix en Provence*, one of two paintings of the subject he executed.

Nick Orchard, Head of Modern British Art, Christie’s: *“As with the majestic scenes Churchill committed to paint in Marrakesh, The Bridge at Aix en Provence demonstrates his preference for painting en plein air, and is one of the finest examples of his favoured subject, water. The bond between Sax and Churchill was so strong when the two were introduced in 1946 that from then on, they often holidayed together. That Sax was present when Churchill created this seminal work is testament to his lasting influence on the former Prime Minister and in a nod to that, Churchill gifted the work to him, cementing a lifelong friendship. We are delighted to offer the painting as a major highlight of our Modern British Evening Sale on 20 October and expect international interest.”*

Sax’s contribution to Churchill’s artistic practice extended beyond the supply of materials, also demonstrating how to exploit their properties to maximum effect. Their shared passion for the medium of oil paint resulted in the conception of a handful of products specifically for Churchill. ‘Royal Blue’, which was previously named ‘Churchill Blue’, was a colour made specifically for the war-time leader in light and deep shades. Churchill, favouring to work on larger canvases than is usually expected by amateurs for *en plein air* painting, preferred to paint quickly, using colours directly from the tube if possible. He had not experienced a colour that came close to the hues he could see in the sky, so Sax created the colour specifically for his purposes. Sax also created a specific medium for Churchill to use with his oil paints, the recipe of which had been kept secret until recently. They also went on many painting trips together, where Sax introduced Churchill to many of his artist connections, including the Swiss painter Cuno Amiet. Sax was also a keen sports fisherman, and to the left of the vista, one can see that Churchill has suggested the figure of someone fishing, using only a few carefully placed brushstrokes, adding a personal touch to the composition.

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