

AN EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY JOHN PIPER (1903-1992)

AT PORTLAND GALLERY
23 April – 8 May 2026

For more information, contact:
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Portland Gallery is pleased to announce a major Modern British art exhibition dedicated to the works of John Piper. Opening in April, the exhibition celebrates one of Britain's most prominent artists of the 20th century, comprising of oils, works on paper and prints. From sombre war-torn Britain through to tranquil landscapes full of colour and abstracted form, the works on display bring to life Piper's exceptional blend of Modernist and Romantic art.

Works such as *Ruined Cottage at Llanthony*, 1940-42, *Welsh Mountain Landscape*, c.1950 and *Snargate Romney Marsh*, 1982, demonstrate Piper's ongoing fascination with the British landscape. Stemming from his appointment as a wartime artist in the early 1940s, this interest continued well into his career as he recorded both the dereliction and beauty of countryside scenes and historic buildings across Britain.

Another highlight, *Ca Pesaro, Venice*, 1961 offers a wonderful glimpse into the artist's architectural and literary inspirations, as well as the emerging expressive style which he carried into the 1970s and 80s. Sourced directly from Piper's family, this dramatic large-scale oil has seldom been seen in public, and the gallery is delighted to have the opportunity to handle this painting.



Ca Pesaro, Venice, 1961, oil on canvas, 33 x 43 in.

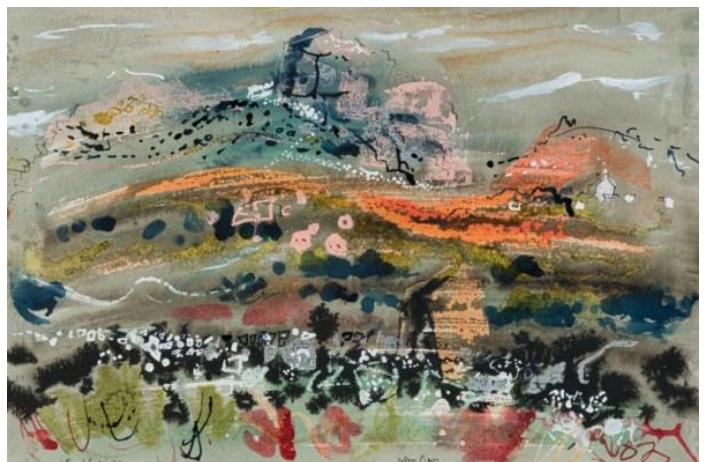
Printmaking enthusiasts will also find exceptional examples of Piper's extensive limited edition print practice. Recognisable castle, cathedral and stately home scenes will be on display including *Waddesdon*, 1977, *Exeter College Chapel, Oxford*, 1977 and a rare, complete set of the six 1982 *Scotney Castle Kent* coloured etchings.



Five Gates of London, 1975, mixed media on paper, 10 1/4 x 38 1/2 in.

Further prints include the vibrant *Sunflowers at Marignac*, 1956, Piper's abstract *Anglesey Beach*, 1963 and screenprint *The Quest*, demonstrating the artist's broader interests in performance and set design.

In bringing together over 60 artworks, the exhibition will provide a valuable opportunity for both collectors and admirers to view and acquire a vast breadth of Piper's output.



Garn Ffchan (Pembrokeshire), 1974, mixed media on paper, 14 3/4 x 22 1/4 in.

John Piper (1903-1992) will be on view at Portland Gallery from the 23 April – 8 May 2026. All works in the exhibition are available to purchase. Opening times: Monday – Friday, 10am – 6pm (or by appointment).

- High resolution images of works are available on request.
- Viewings of artworks can be arranged on request.
- A printed catalogue supports the exhibition.

PORTLAND GALLERY

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JOHN PIPER, C.H. (1903-1992)

BIOGRAPHY

Famous for his romantic landscapes, views of ruined churches, stately homes and castles, John Piper is considered to be one of the most significant British artists of the 20th Century.

Born in Epsom in 1903, Piper's inclination to become an artist was inhibited by his father's desire for him to join the family law firm. Following the death of his father in 1927, Piper enrolled in the Richmond School of Art and a year later the Royal College of Art, leaving without graduating in 1929.

In the early 1930s Piper exhibited with the London Group and became secretary of the 'Seven and Five Society' which included Henry Moore, Ivon Hitchens, Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. He also made several trips to Paris where he befriended Alexander Calder and visited the studios of Arp, Brancusi and Jean Hélion. Surrounded by these avant-garde artists, Piper's rarely seen work of this period reflected the trend for abstraction but by the late 1930s he had returned to a more naturalistic style.

In 1937 Piper married the writer Myfanwy Evans who collaborated with him in some of his later stage work with Benjamin Britten as a librettist. Collaborations were important to Piper and fuelled his artistic output. The Shell Guides (a series of illustrated books on the British Isles) were created with the poet John Betjeman and he produced pottery with Geoffrey Eastop. Piper worked on stage designs and costumes for theatre and ballet as well as the designs for seven operas by Benjamin Britten. A versatile artist, Piper also wrote articles on art and architecture and designed stained glass windows for a number of buildings including the new Coventry Cathedral.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Piper was commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee to capture the effects of the war on the British landscape. The devastation of the Blitz was easily assimilated to Piper's personal interest in old ruined buildings. He had also lost his eldest brother in the

First World War which may have made the commission particularly poignant and enabled him to respond with his deepest emotion. During these years he travelled the country, capturing the atmosphere of places. These scenes do not always directly relate to bomb-damage but reflect, in Piper's unique way, a sense of loss and nostalgia. In 1944 he was appointed as an Official War Artist.

Piper never referred to himself as a 'neo-romantic' artist, though his landscapes were heavily inspired by earlier painters such as JMW Turner and JS Cotman. Works from the 1960s and 70s once again, became more abstract in style though this time focussed more heavily on the play of colour and form of the landscape with spontaneous mark making.

Piper died at his beloved home in Fawley Bottom, Henley in 1992.

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