

. AGNEWS .

EST. 1817

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Pietro Annigoni (Milan 1910-1988 Florence)

Autumn: an extensive landscape

Signed, dated and inscribed 'P
ANNIGONI/LONDON LI' and signed with
artist's monogram (lower right); and inscribed by
the artist on reverse 'Pietro Annigoni in Londra nel
Marzo LI – 41 Earls Court Sq. SW5 Firenze Piazza
S. Croce 9'

Oil and tempera on canvas laid on board

19 3/4 x 23 9/16 in. (50.2 x 59.9 cm.)

Painted in 1951



Provenance

Purchased from the artist in 1951 by Major Willoughby Norman Esq.;
and by descent to the previous owner.

Literature

Mary Sorrell, 'Pietro Annigoni', in *The Queen*, London, 15 August 1951, p. 19.

Charles Richard Cammell, *Pietro Annigoni*. London, 1954, pl. 16.

Charles Richard Cammell, *Pietro Annigoni*. London, 1958, 2nd edition, pl. 22.

Nicolò Rasmò, *Pietro Annigoni*, Florence, 1961, pl. 59.

Ugo Longo, *Pietà e amore nell'arte di Pietro Annigoni*, Milan, Galleria Cortina, 1968, p. 29.

Luciano Pelizzari, *Pietro Annigoni, Il period inglese: 1949-1971*, Rome, 1991, pp. 68, 165, 273, no. 113, fig. 209.

Exhibited

London, Thos. Agnew & Sons Ltd., *Exhibition of Drawings and some Paintings by Pietro Annigoni*, June-July 1952, no. 21.

Paris, Galerie Beaux Arts, *Peintures et Dessins de Pietro Annigoni*, 3-23 December 1953.

London, Wildenstein and Co, *An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Pietro Annigoni*, 7 April- 1 May 1954, no. 10.

London, Galleries of the Federation of British Artist, *Paintings and Drawings by Pietro Annigoni*, 25 April- 3 June 1961.

Milan, Società per le Belle Arti ed esposizione permanente, *Pietro Annigoni pittore*, 23 February-19 March 1962.

Milan, Galleria Cortina, *Antologica di Pietro Annigoni*, 25 October-25 November 1968.

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According to Bernard Berenson, “Annigoni was not only the greatest painter of the twentieth century, but his works rank with the most celebrated painters of all time. He will remain in the history of art as the protester of a dark age.” From his beginnings in Florence, to the height of his fame and fortune Annigoni pursued his own path, standing alone against the forces of modernism in art. Both in style and technique, he based himself on the masters of the Italian Renaissance, placing great stress on draughtsmanship and often working in tempera. Annigoni was a bohemian, a drinker, a fighter and a womaniser, yet the world’s most powerful and celebrated people sought him out for portraits. In 1947, Annigoni, along with other artists, signed *Il manifesto dei Pittori Moderni della Realtà* (“The Manifesto of Modern Painters of Reality”), which was also strongly supported by Giorgio de Chirico.

The turning point in his career was a commission from the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers to paint a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II (1954-5, Fishmongers’ Hall, London); it was endlessly reproduced, including on postage stamps and banknotes in various countries, and it was rashly claimed that it made him “the most famous artist in the world – not excluding even Picasso”. Amongst his celebrity sitters were several other members of the British royal family, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and Pope John XXIII, and the artist subsequently had many exhibitions in London - at Wildenstein in 1950 and 1954 and at Agnew’s in 1952 and 1956.

Although he became known as the painter of the Queen, perhaps Pietro Annigoni’s instinctive genius was for landscape and allegorical works. Here, the artist gives full rein to his extraordinary imagination, to the wild and mysterious sense of beauty which would seem to overflow his romantic personality. His panoramic painting *The Tempest* (formerly (?) Croff collection, Milan), painted as early as 1939, features already this other-worldly quality and is reminiscent of 16th century Netherlandish *Weltlandschaften* (‘world landscapes’) by artists such as Joachim Patinir and Albrecht Altdorfer. By 1947, Annigoni had reached the height of his powers as a painter of fantastic landscape, as can be seen by the painting *Harmony in Tuscany* (formerly (?) in the collection of Lady Howard de Walden). Praised by the Annigoni expert Luciano Pelizzari as ‘une delle opere piu belle del corpus annigoniano’ (one of the most beautiful works in the oeuvre of Annigoni; op. cit, p. 68), the present picture can be closely compared with *Hermit in a Wood* (fig. 1) and *The Hermit* (fig. 2) both executed in 1949. The autumnal character of the wildness and eerie grandeur of rocks and shattered trees as well as the loneliness of the solitary, exemplify Annigoni’s romanticism and interest in the tradition of early European landscape painting, in particular Pieter Breughel’s famed *Seasons* from 1565 (fig. 3-4).

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Moreover, landscape of the most impressive kind forms the background, not only of some of his sacred compositions, but of some of his loveliest portraits such as the *Portrait of Princess Elena Corsini*, also executed in 1951, where the beauty of the sitter is set in a scene of autumnal magnificence (fig. 5), reminding us of the transience of beauty.



Fig. 1: Pietro Annigoni, *The Hermit in the wood*, oil and tempera on panel, 51 x 61 cm, private collection.

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Fig. 2: Pietro Annigoni, *The Hermit*, oil and tempera on board,
50 x 40 cm, private collection.

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Fig. 3: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Return of the Herd (Autumn)*, oil on panel, 117 cm × 159.7 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Fig. 4: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Hunters in the Snow (Winter)*, oil on panel, 116,5 × 162 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

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Fig. 5: Pietro Annigoni, *Portrait of Princess Elena Corsini*, 1951,
oil and tempera on board, 60 x 48 cm, private collection.