

John Piper, Rock-Face, Modern British, Oil on Panel, 20th Century,  
Abstract

John Piper CH

Sold



REF: 11137

Height: 15.8 cm (6.2")

Width: 20.5 cm (8.1")

Depth: 2 cm (0.8")

## Description

John Piper (British, 1903-1992) : Rock-face Signed 'John Piper' (lower right) Signed and inscribed with title (verso)

Oil on panel

Executed in 1950 according to Buchholz Gallery label verso

Provenance: Buchholz Gallery (Curt Valentin), New York

Exhibited: Buchholz Gallery (Curt Valentin), John Piper, Recent Work, October 17th-4th November, 1950, Cat. no. 10

Related to: In the monograph on Piper by John Woods, the picture most like it is a larger oil, Rock Face, Cwm Tryfan 1950, plate 121, collection of Museum of Modern Art, New York. Rock-face is probably an observation at Tryfan also.

Reference: John Piper : Special Exhibition, Blenheim Palace until 9th April. The Mountains of Wales, National Museum Cardiff, until 9th May

Height 15.8 cm., 6 ¼ in., Length 20 ½ cm., 8 in., In a color washed, bevelled frame Frame Height 35 cm., 13 ¾ in., Length 40 cm., 15 ¾ in.

John Piper is famous for architecturally detailed pictures of houses, churches and ruins. As S. John Woods writes in *John Piper: Painting, Drawings and Theatre Designs 1932-1954* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954) 'his approach was that he wanted to paint a house as if he were designing it, understanding not just its appearance but its anatomy and its sentiment'. John Carter wrote in an exhibition catalogue, that Piper, is 'acutely aware of the bones of a building.' This approach Piper also brought to his landscape paintings, and it is clear in the present work. A sense of painting while keeping at the front of the mind the inner structure of the stone in front of him; its age and architecture. There is the sense of the boulder as the result of someone's intention, as an object of a Creation.

In *British Romantic Artists* (London: William COX, 1942) John Piper wrote: 'Romantic art is the result of a vision that can see in things something significant beyond ordinary significance: something that for a moment seems to contain the whole world; and, when the moment is past, carries over some comment on life or experience beside the comment on appearances.'

In 1950 John Piper was well into his post-war period which was characterised by techniques such as the scratching in the oil paint apparent in the present work, a more sombre palette generally, and a concentration on landscape and natural features, particularly those of Portland in Dorset, where his fascination for geology in a form which has been changed by man could have full rein in the quarry; and also, extensively, those of North Wales, which he had been visiting since a commission in 1943 to paint the underground quarry in which the Nation Gallery's collection of art was being stored for the duration of the war. He returned for periods of the winter over the next seven or eight years, for part of that time, including in 1949-50, renting a cottage at Bodesi, below the Tryfan Mountain. Boulder fields at Bodesi, Bodesi

Farmhouse, 2011

Here there was much inspiration: in the extreme geology of the land, and in the effect of winter light on mountains. Piper was inspired by the IDEA of the sublime, and the eighteenth century landscape work of Richard Wilson, and spent time trying to locate Wilson's viewpoints. Richa...