

A watercolor-style landscape painting. The scene depicts a wide river or stream in the foreground, with a sandy or light-colored bank on the right. The water is rendered in various shades of blue and green, suggesting reflections and movement. In the middle ground, there are several trees with dense foliage in shades of green and yellow. The background shows a sky with soft, blended colors of blue, purple, and pink, indicating a dawn or dusk setting. The overall style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a textured appearance.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Sir Winston Churchill

DAN SCOTT

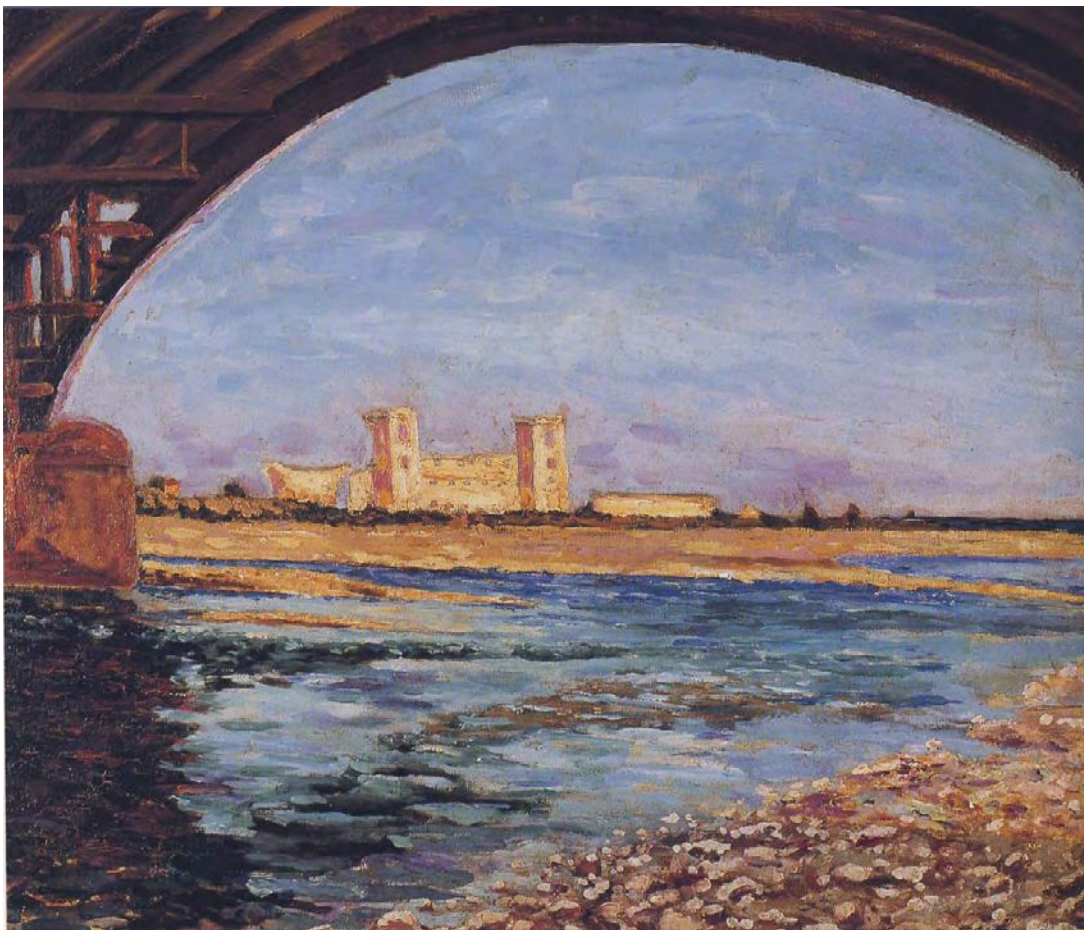
Sir Winston Churchill

Painter and Prime Minister

Most people know Sir Winston Churchill for his role as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945. But few know that he was also an avid painter. In this ebook, I take a closer look at some of his paintings and his life in the arts.

*“Painting is a companion with whom one may walk
a great part of life’s journey.”*

Sir Winston Churchill



Sir Winston Churchill, Racecourse, Nice, 1921



Interesting Facts

Here are some interesting facts about Churchill's life in the arts:

- Churchill started painting at the age of 40, shortly after the failed Dardanelles campaign forced his resignation. Overcome with what he referred to as “the black dog” of depression and anxiety, he was encouraged to paint by his sister-in-law, Lady Gwendoline Bertie. In his own words:

“And then it was that the Muse of Painting came to my rescue”.

Sir Winston Churchill

- The above quote is from Churchill's 1921 essay, *Painting as a Pastime*, which documents his thoughts about art. You can read for free [here](#).
- Fellow artist and friend, Paul Maze, also encouraged Churchill to paint. They would end up being lifelong painting companions and I assume Maze had a strong influence on Churchill's development in painting. Churchill even wrote the forward for the catalog of Maze's first New York exhibition in 1939:

“His great knowledge of painting and draughtsmanship have enabled him to perfect his remarkable gift. With the fewest of strokes, he can create an impression at once true and beautiful. Here is no toiling seeker after preconceived effects, but a vivid and powerful interpreter to us of the forces and harmony of Nature”.

Sir Winston Churchill on Paul Maze

- He was timid about his skills in painting and insisted he was only a practicing amateur. He even submitted paintings to exhibitions under pseudonyms “Charles Morin” and “David Winter”. In 1947, he only revealed his true identity after two of his paintings were accepted to the summer exhibition at London's Royal Academy of Arts. A year later in 1948, he was elected by the Royal Academy as Honorary Academician Extraordinary—a remarkable feat for someone who insisted they were just an amateur.



- He was a prolific painter in the latter part of his life, creating over 550 works. No easy feat considering his other achievements in politics and writing.



Sir Winston Churchill, A Distant View of Eze, 1930



A Closer Look

at Some of His Paintings

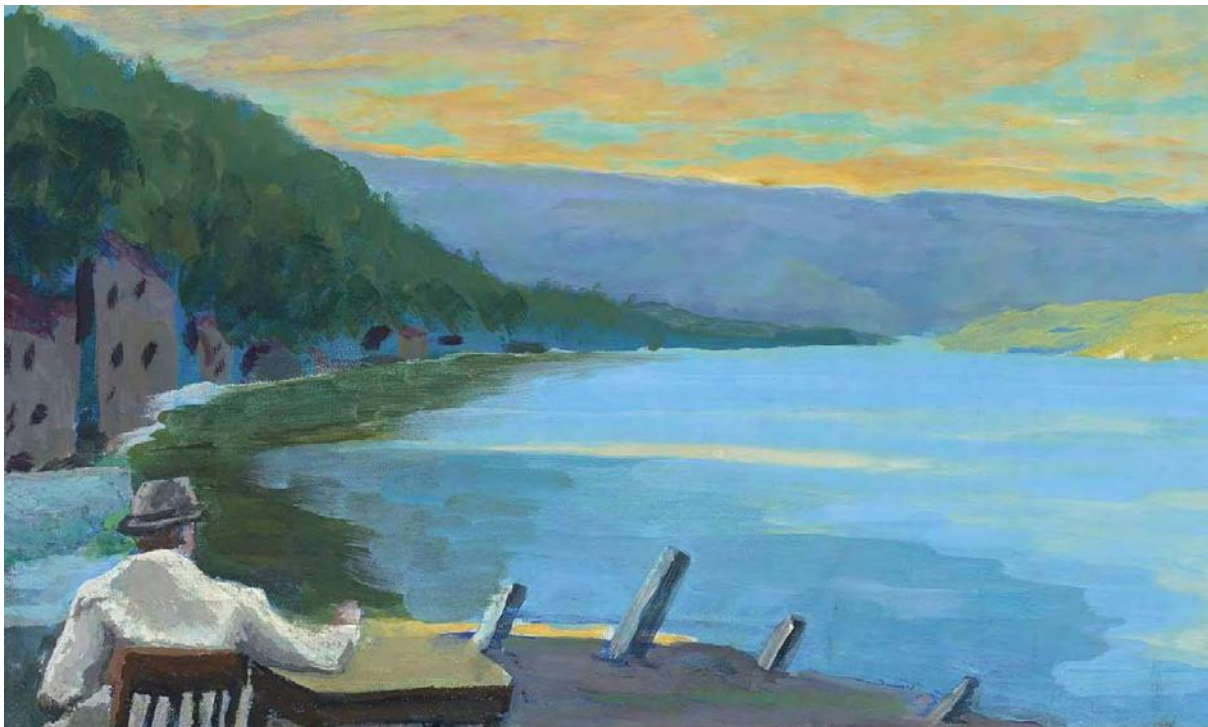
Churchill painted mostly impressionist landscapes using oils. Color was clearly his focus, as you can tell from quotes like this:

“I cannot pretend to feel impartial about the colors, I rejoice with the brilliant ones and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns.”

Sir Winston Churchill in Painting as a Pastime

He was heavily influenced by many of the top Impressionists like Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne, and Édouard Manet, which you can see in his paintings. The simplified forms, broken color, and overall colorfulness are typical Impressionist traits.

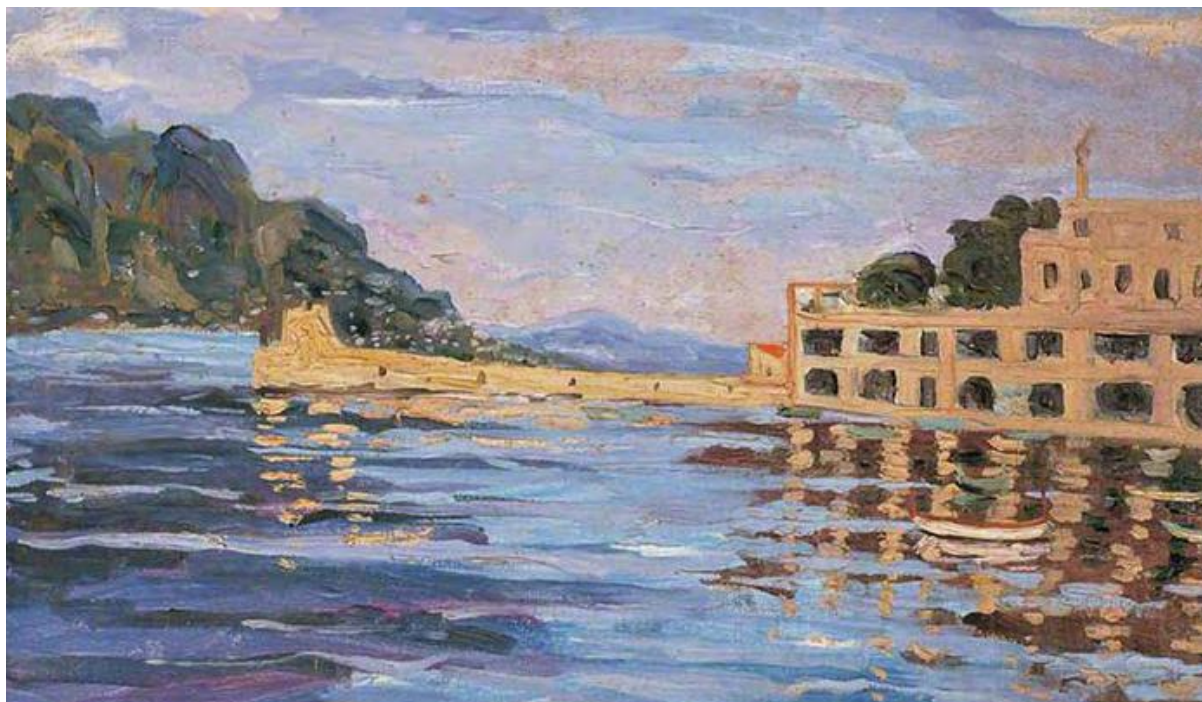
The painting below features an awkward composition, with a man sitting in the bottom left-hand corner looking out over the landscape. There are several strong color shapes in the painting: the light sky, the dull purple mountain in the background, the land around the middle-ground, and the body of water. Churchill’s solid brushwork suggests a calmness in the environment.



Sir Winston Churchill, *Scene on the River Meuse (I)*, 1946



The two paintings below are great demonstrations of how to paint reflections in the water. Horizontal strokes of broken color mimic the buildings, trees, boats, and sky.



Sir Winston Churchill, The Club House and Jetty, Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, 1930



Sir Winston Churchill, The Harbour at St. Jean Cap Ferrat, 1921



Although Churchill was not academically trained, he demonstrates skillful drawing in the painting below. Architecture is always a challenge to paint because any mistakes tend to be obvious. Nature is far more forgiving, in that nobody will notice if you paint a tree branch wrong, or forget to paint a cloud in the sky.

The dappled light hitting the building creates an interesting design of light and shadow, breaking up what would otherwise be a rather solid and bland shape.



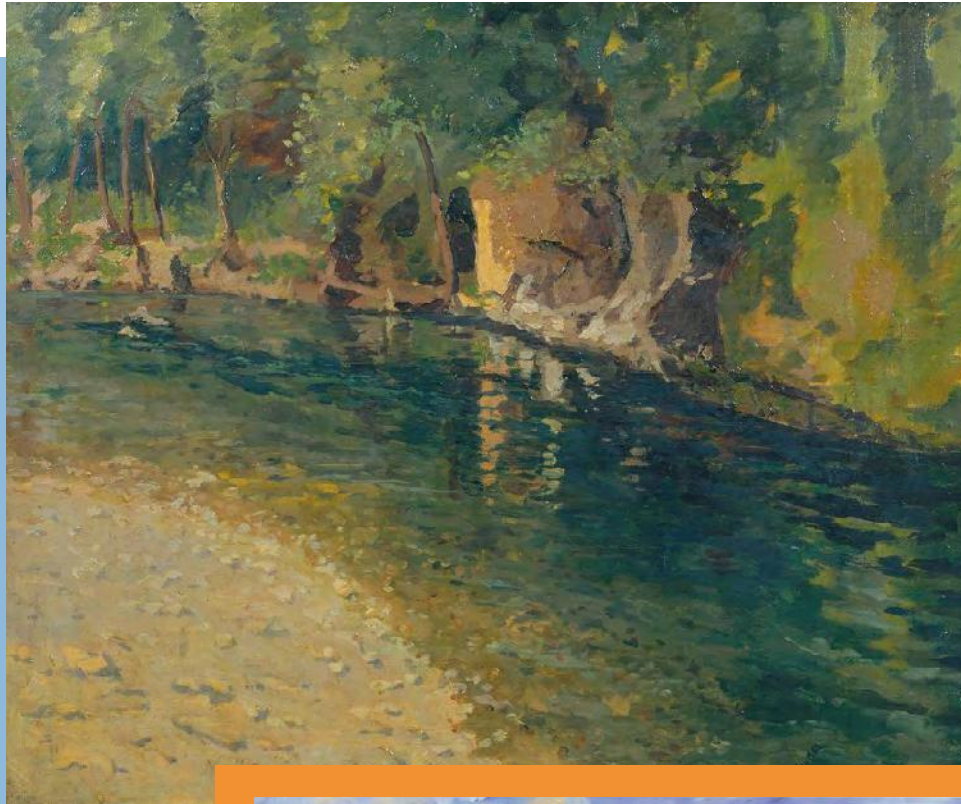
Sir Winston Churchill, The Gardener's House on the Estate of Madame Balzan

On the next page is a challenging subject to paint because of the transparent and reflective nature of water. Not only did Churchill need to capture the blue-green of the water, but he also needed to capture the rocks and sand showing through the water



and the colors being reflected. He did a great job in my opinion.

You get a sense of the increasing depth of the river as the colors get deeper and richer. A few clever dabs of light orange and green are enough to capture the broken reflections on the quick-flowing water.



Sir Winston Churchill, The Loup River, Alpes Maritimes, 1936

The high-key painting below demonstrates some interesting use of repetition in the trees. It reminds me of some of Monet's popular paintings.



Sir Winston Churchill, Trees near Breccles



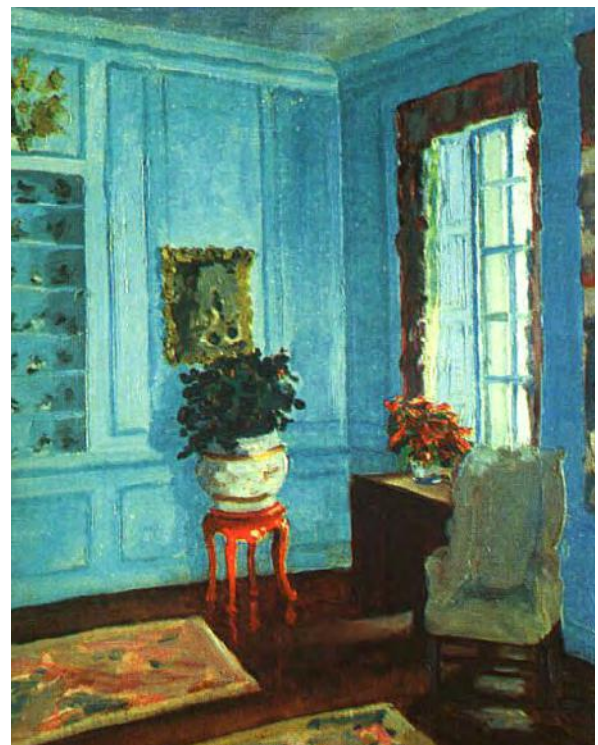
Below is one of my favorite paintings by Churchill. Soft, pastel colors were used to depict what I assume to have been a fading sun. There is a strong sense of depth and atmosphere with the layering of colors, from the oranges and yellows just above the horizon line to the blues and purples at the top. Some light orange colors are scumbled on top to suggest light hitting the clouds scattered throughout the sky. The foreground provides some contrast for the pastel sky, with its drab grays, browns, and greens.



Sir Winston Churchill, Rocky Scene in Sicily

Churchill also painted still lifes and interior scenes from time to time, though I do prefer his landscapes.

Sir Winston Churchill, Study of Roses



Sir Winston Churchill, The Interior of the Room near the Window



Words of Advice

by Sir Winston Churchill

Below are extracts from Churchill's *Painting as a Pastime* essay which I found to be particularly interesting, starting with some wise words of advice for people taking up painting later in life:

“To have reached the age of forty without ever handling a brush or fiddling with a pencil, to have regarded with mature eye the painting of pictures of any kind as a mystery, to have stood agape before the chalk of the pavement artist, and then suddenly to find oneself plunged in the middle of a new and intense form of interest and action with paints and palettes and canvases, and not to be discouraged by results, is an astonishing and enriching experience. I hope it may be shared by others. I should be glad if these lines induced others to try the experiment which I have tried, and if some at least were to find themselves dowered with an absorbing new amusement delightful to themselves, and at any rate not violently harmful to man or beast.”

On the joy of painting:

“Happy are the painters, for they shall not be lonely. Light and color, peace and hope, will keep them company to the end, or almost to the end, of the day.”

“Just to paint is great fun, the colors are lovely to look at and delicious to squeeze out.”

On the challenges of mastering painting:

“When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting, and so get to the bottom of the subject.”





Sir Winston Churchill, *Daybreak at Cassis*, 1920

On the struggles of starting a painting:

“Having bought the colors, an easel, and a canvas, the next step was to begin. But what a step to take! The palette gleamed with beads of color; fair and white rose the canvas; the empty brush hung poised, heavy with destiny, irresolute in the air. My hand seemed arrested by a silent veto. At that moment the loud approaching sound of a motor-car was heard in the drive. From this chariot there stepped swiftly and lightly none other than the gifted wife of Sir John Lavery. ‘Painting! But what are you hesitating about? Let me have a brush—the big one.’ Splash into the turpentine, wallop into the blue and the white, frantic flourish on the palette—clean no longer—and then several large, fierce strokes and slashes of blue on the absolutely cowering canvas. Anyone could see that it could not hit back. No evil fate avenged the jaunty violence. The canvas grinned in helplessness before me. The spell was broken. The sickly inhibitions rolled away. I seized the largest brush and fell upon my victim with Berserk fury. I have never felt any awe of a canvas since.”



On using oils over watercolors:

“I write no word in disparagement of watercolors. But there really is nothing like oils. You have a medium at your disposal which offers real power, if you only can find out how to use it. Moreover, it is easier to get a certain distance along the road by its means than by watercolors. First of all, you can correct mistakes much more easily. One sweep of the palette-knife ‘lifts’ the blood and tears of a morning from the canvas and enables a fresh start to be made; indeed the canvas is all the better for past impressions. Secondly, you can approach your problem from any direction. You need not build downwards awkwardly from white paper to your darkest dark. You may strike where you please, beginning if you will with a moderate central arrangement of middle tones, and then hurling in the extremes when the psychological moment comes. Lastly, the pigment itself is such nice stuff to handle (if it does not retaliate).”

On the beauty of nature:

“Once you begin to study it, all Nature is equally interesting and equally charged with beauty.”



Sir Winston Churchill, Lake Near Breccles In Autumn, 1930

