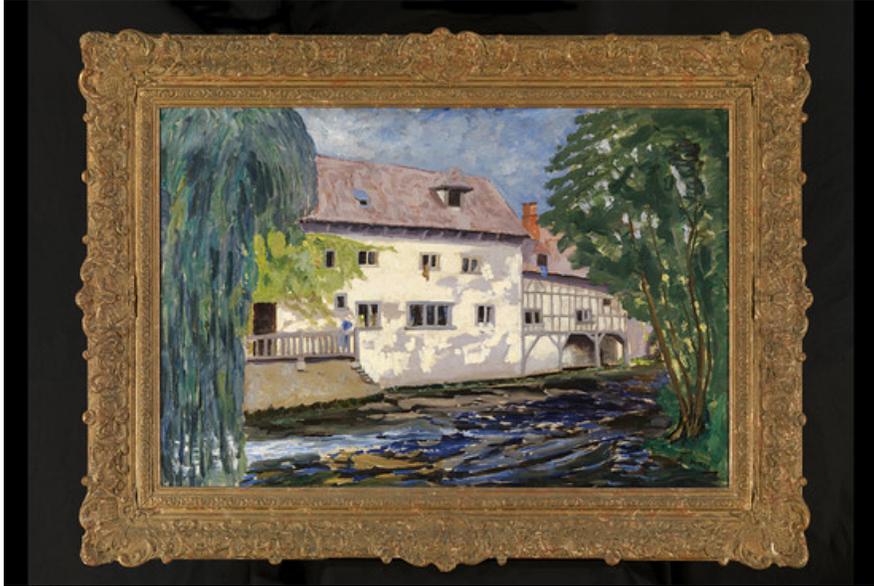


Winston Churchill Paintings to Make Public Debut in Georgia

Blood, Oils, Tears and Sweat: Paintings of Winston Churchill, many never before seen in public, are to go on view in various locations in Georgia

By CAMERON MCWHIRTER

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Winston Churchill's 'The Mill at St-Georges-Motel,' from around 1930 *Reproduced with permission of Anthea Morton-Saner on behalf of Churchill Heritage Ltd.*

For decades, Winston Churchill dazzled the world with his statecraft, military mind and oratory.

Then there was his painting.

For Churchill, art was a passionate hobby. Along with whiskey and cigars, it helped him handle the stress of leadership and cope with the rough-and-tumble of British politics and the crisis of global war.

"Painting is complete as a distraction," the two-time prime minister and Nobelist in literature wrote in 1948, in a booklet he had based on two 1920s articles. "I know of nothing which, without exhausting the body, more entirely absorbs the mind. Whatever the worries of the hour or the threats of the future, once the picture has begun to flow along, there is no room for them in the mental screen."

So how good was he? Promoters are about to give viewers in Georgia a chance to judge. "The Art of Diplomacy: Winston Churchill and the Pursuit of Painting" will tour seven small exhibition halls across Georgia beginning Aug. 2, starting at a historic home in LaGrange and ending sometime next year after stops at Sea Island and Savannah, among other places.

The main exhibition, from early October to the beginning of February 2015, will be at the Millennium Gate Museum, a 12,000-square-foot, neoclassical triumphal arch, set amid modern condominiums near an in-town Atlanta shopping center. The Atlanta exhibit, which will take over the entire museum, will include more than 30 of Churchill's paintings, as well as family mementos and photographs.

Eighteen of the paintings have never appeared in public before, and several others only rarely. Duncan Sandys, a Churchill great-grandson who now lives in Atlanta, helped by lending 17 of his family's Churchill paintings.

Rodney Mims Cook, Jr., founder of the Millennium Gate Museum and a neoclassical architect, conceived the show. Mr. Cook, scion of a wealthy Atlanta family and an unabashed Anglophile, has been trying to promote Georgia's historical links with the U.K. for years, in part through his \$18 million monument-museum. He says the museum has worked hard to attract visitors after the 2008 recession "clobbered" it.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill painting in his studio *The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images*

So far, he says, Atlanta hasn't responded as strongly as he would like to his call to embrace its English ties. The Churchill exhibit "might help change that," he said.

"This is a bit of a coup, to put it mildly, for Atlanta," said David Coombs, a British authority on Churchill's art and co-author of "Sir Winston Churchill: His Life and His Paintings."

Churchill produced more than 500 paintings, and exhibits of his work have been held across the world. (Hollywood even referenced his work by showing a look-alike painting in Paris in the 1951 art-world musical "An American in Paris.") Many of his works are on permanent display at Chartwell, the Churchill's family estate in the English county of Kent.

The Georgia show, which will include landscapes of Europe and Africa, will be the first major one in the Southeast U.S., according to Jeremy Kobus, director of the Millennium Gate Museum.

Churchill turned to painting out of despair in 1915 after resigning in shame as first lord of the Admiralty after a disastrous military operation during World War I. At his family's country estate, "I had great anxiety and no means of relieving it," he wrote in the 1948 booklet, "Painting as a Pastime."

One day, he saw a sister-in-law painting and decided to take it up. Michael Sheldon, author of "Young Titan: The Making of Winston Churchill," said that what began as "a form of therapy" became a constant interest. For years, "whenever time allowed," Churchill brought out his brushes, paints and canvas.

"He's pretty good, especially for a politician," Mr. Sheldon said.

Churchill's paintings can range in quality, according to Mr. Coombs. "When he's very good, he's very, very good," Mr. Coombs said. "But sometimes, he's horrid."