

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Walter Richard Sickert (1860 - 1942)

The Church of Santa Maria Maddalena, Venice

Oil, pen and black ink on paper, laid down on board.

Signed Sickert at the lower left.

244 x 148 m. (9 5/8 x 5 3/4 in.)

Probably datable to Sickert's first lengthy stay in Venice, this oil sketch depicts the small domed church of Santa Maria della Maddalena, with the Fondamenta delle Colonnate at the left. Built around 1760 by the architect Tommaso Temanza, the Neoclassical church of the Maddalena is located in a relatively isolated area of the Cannarregio district of Venice. Sickert drew this sketch while standing on the small Ponte Correr, which crosses the Rio della Maddalena. (A contemporary photograph of the same view is shown here.)

This small painting may be related to two other oil sketches of the same view by Sickert, both painted on panel. An oil sketch that recently appeared at auction is much more sketchy in appearance, and has been dated by Baron to c.1903. The present sheet is, however, closer in style and handling to another small panel, of similar dimensions, which was last recorded in the collection of Viscount Radcliffe in 1960. Lillian Browse's succinct description of the latter painting may equally be applied to the present work: 'This small panel is large in conception, dark and sonorous in colour, and rich and 'juicy' in handling.'

The first recorded owner of this oil sketch was Mrs. Frances Evans, who, with her husband Judge William Evans (1847-1918), was among Sickert's most loyal patrons and collectors between 1907 and

1914. Judge and Mrs. Evans commissioned paintings from the artist based on drawings he showed them in his studio. As Lillian Browse has written, 'Sickert, being a complete professional, saw nothing wrong in repeating a subject, sometimes several times over, according to his client's commissions. Both Lady Jowitt and Mrs. Francis Evans, old friends of his, bear witness to this fact...Mrs. Evans says that when she and her husband, Judge Evans, went to Sickert's studio he would show them a pile of small sketches and drawings and ask them to take their pick. He would then paint an oil from whatever they chose, usually for £25.' The Evanses bought or commissioned at least four paintings of Venetian views by Sickert, and also owned several paintings of Dieppe, as well as a handful of figure compositions.

Judge and Mrs. Evans formed their collection over a period of some twenty years. In an obituary, The Burlington Magazine noted of Judge Evans that 'He was a very genial and discriminating patron of contemporary art, and was, with Mrs. Evans who shared his taste, a constant visitor at all exhibitions, galleries, and sales where works of contemporary painting or drawing were exhibited. He and Mrs. Evans collected a large number of works which show contemporary art in England at its best.' An exhibition of works from the Evans collection was held at the Goupil Gallery in London in May 1918, and included, apart from several works by Sickert, paintings and drawings by Charles Conder, Harold Gilman, Spencer Gore, Augustus John, Henry Lamb, William Orpen, Phillip Wilson Steer, William Strang, Henry Tonks and many others.

Provenance:

Probably Judge William Evans, Bayswater, London and Ilmington Manor, Warwickshire
His wife, Mrs. Frances Louise Evans
Given by her to Dr. Lloyd Williams
Given by him to a private collector
Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 3 March 1989, lot 311
Piccadilly Gallery, London
Max Rutherston, London, in 1990
Purchased from him by the Misses A. and O. Heywood
Private collection, until 2012.

Exhibitions

Possibly London, The Goupil Gallery, The Judge Evans Collection, May-June 1918, no.137 ('Venice');
London, Max Rutherston, The Influence of the Slade, 1890-1920, October-November 1990, no.85.

Literature:

Wendy Baron, Sickert: Paintings and Drawings, New Haven and London, 2006, p.275, under no.181,
no.1.