Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



John Wonnacott

Estuary Window

Pencil on cream paper, with framing lines in pencil.
Inscribed with colour notes darker(?), pink sky(?), very bright, slightly paler than sky, blue purple grey and pale orange.
403 x 610 mm. (15 7/8 x 24 in.) [image]
461 x 657 mm. (18 1/8 x 25 7/8 in.) [sheet]

'The window pane is again the metaphor for the artist's formal concern with vision, it is literally a transparent plane between our eyes and the scene we can see, on which we can imagine being able to trace what we are looking at. The further the glass is from us, the smaller the angle of vision will be, if we go right up to the glass, and press our nose against it, the scene will be much larger and our angle of vision will be more like the 180° seen by the eye…This is the idea for the paintings, the motivation for making them and the subject matter comes directly out of this excitement with vision.' (Lynda Morris, 'The Excitement of Vision', in London, Marlborough Fine Art, John Wonnacott: Recent Work, 1985, p.8).

'In all my recent work…the frame of my studio bay window, or some section of it, has been allowed to dominate the picture surface with its own geometry. The main series of window paintings begin a study through tone of the changing atmospheric light that unifies the busy space outside my window – the road, trees, railway, mudflats and sea that stretch across the estuary from Essex to Kent. Each painting records a particular time of day and season (under specific conditions of weather), and is made from direct observation, though with an extensive photographic backup. The camera is used both to freeze the rapidly changing sky and its immediate effect on the estuary, and to track the people who regularly pass beneath my window. Each figure – bait digger, commuter, neighbour etc., is an individual portrait of someone with whose routine and appearance I have become familiar during the course of the painting.' (John Wonnacott, November 1980, in London, Marlborough Fine Art, John Wonnacott: First London Exhibition, 1980-1981, p.3)

Provenance:

Marlborough Fine Art, London.

Artist description:

Born in London in 1940, John Wonnacott studied at the Slade School of Art between 1958 and 1963. He then taught art at Reading University from 1963 to 1970, and at the Norwich School of Art since

1976. His first one-man show was held in 1977. A painter of portraits, landscapes and self-portraits, Wonnacott lives and works in a house overlooking the Thames estuary at Leigh-on-Sea, near Southend on the South Essex coast. Paintings by Wonnacott are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain and the Imperial War Museum in London, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, and elsewhere.