

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

oil on canvas
57.2 cm x 86.4 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery,
Founders' Fund
VAG 34.6



© Estate of Stanley Spencer/SODART (Montreal) 2006

Stanley Spencer

Alpine Landscape, 1933



Image source: *Stanley Spencer: The Apotheosis of Love*. London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1991.

Artist's Biography

Nationality: British
Born: 1891-06-30, Cookham, Berks
Died: 1959-12-14

Sir Stanley Spencer, (June 30, 1891 - December 14, 1959), was an English painter.

He was born and lived in the Thames-side village of Cookham in Berkshire, where the Methodist Chapel he attended is now the Stanley Spencer Gallery, a gallery dedicated to his art. He studied at the Slade School of Art UCL in London from 1908 to 1912 under Henry Tonks and others; such was his attachment to his home that he commuted from Cookham to the Slade, earning thereby from other students the nickname "Cookham".

Spencer developed a naive style, influenced in part by the colourful primitivism of Paul Gauguin. He held deep Christian beliefs, and many of his works were religious in nature. Some, such as *Resurrection Cookham* (1923-27), set Biblical scenes in Cookham and depicted the villagers as characters from Scripture. His finest work, according to many critics, may be seen at Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere. Stanley Spencer served as a war artist in World War II and was knighted in 1959.

Source: "Stanley Spencer," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. December 11, 2005. <http://www.wikipedia.org>.

Artistic Context

Nationality: British

Training: Maidenhead Technical Institute, Berkshire; Slade School, London

Peers: John Nash; Roger Fry; Duncan Grant

Group: Post-Impressionism; 20th century

Provenance: purchased from Arthur Tooth & Sons Limited by Charles Holmes on behalf of the Founders in 1934

Subject: landscape; redemption; eroticism; portraits; religion

Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Stanley Spencer
Study for the Last Supper; Trees, 1920
wash and pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.1 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Angel
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.2

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

Stanley Spencer
Men with Hats; Face with Hats
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.3 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Babies and Bearded Man; Untitled
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.4 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Woman at Dresser; Woman Dressing
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.5 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Group of Figures; Figures and Building
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.6 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Lady with Chair; Group of Figures
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.7 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Two Faces
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.8

Stanley Spencer
Portrait of a Woman
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.9

Stanley Spencer
Figures and Goats (Switzerland)
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.10 a-b

Stanley Spencer
No. 2 Welder Girl (Moisi); Frank Chambers, Furnace Man, 1940-1941
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.11 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Baby; Creche Study
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.12 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

Stanley Spencer
Portrait
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.13

Stanley Spencer
Men and Women Walking: Untitled
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.14 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Portrait of a Woman, 1921-1922
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.15

Stanley Spencer
Men and Mules; Study for the Resurrection of Soldiers, 1928
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.16 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Study of a Boy; Study of a Boy
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.17 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Male Nude; Female Nudes
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.18 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Portrait; Female Nude
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.19 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Margaret Slessor
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.20

Stanley Spencer
Young Woman; Woman
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.21 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Study for "Love Among the Nations", 1935
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.22

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

Stanley Spencer
Portrait of a Man
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.23

Stanley Spencer
Portrait of a Woman
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.24

Stanley Spencer
Portrait of a Woman
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.25

Stanley Spencer
Study of a Man
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.26

Stanley Spencer
Figures on Floor
pencil and wash on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.27 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Portrait of a Man, 1922
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.28

Stanley Spencer
Old Faces; Faces and Studies, 1920
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.29 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Nurse; Nurse
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.30 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Woman Climbing Ladder
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.31

Stanley Spencer
Male Nude; Female Nudes
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 92.25.32 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

Stanley Spencer
Figure; Percy Rothenstein
gouache and graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.1 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Figures with Dogs; Figures
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.2 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Christ with Figures; Figure Studies
graphite and pencil crayon on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.3 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Sketches of Figures; Christ and Donkey and other Studies
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.4 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Study for Resurrection
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.5

Stanley Spencer
Man in Bowler Hat with Figures; List of Names
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.6 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Magi
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.7

Stanley Spencer
Figures
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.8

Stanley Spencer
Figure Study; Figure Study
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.9 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Hilda and Stanley and other Figures; Female Studies
pencil on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.10 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

Stanley Spencer
Female Study
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.11

Stanley Spencer
Figure Studies
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.12

Stanley Spencer
Hilda and Stanley, Head of Woman; Figure Studies
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.13 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Figure Study
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.14

Stanley Spencer
Nude Studies; Notes
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.15 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Studies of Soldiers
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.16

Stanley Spencer
Christ (Resurrextion)
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.17

Stanley Spencer
Composition Studies; Study for Marrow Bed and Yew Tree
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.18 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Hand and Flower; Hand and Flower with Figures
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.19 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Women and Children
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.20

Stanley Spencer

Alpine Landscape, 1933

Stanley Spencer
Study of Table with Figures
pencil crayon on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.21

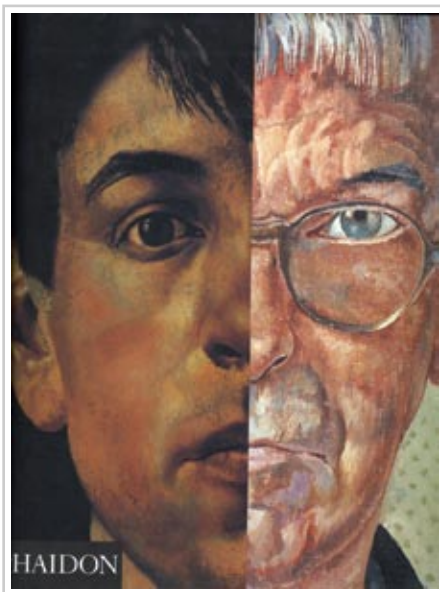
Stanley Spencer
Male Study; Man in Hammock
coloured pencil and graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.22 a-b

Stanley Spencer
Man with Cross
pencil crayon and graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.23

Stanley Spencer
Figure Studies
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.24

Stanley Spencer
Study for Glasgow
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.25

Stanley Spencer
Figure Studies; Figure Studies
graphite on paper
Gift of Mr. John F. Petch
VAG 94.69.26 a-b



Bibliography

Stanley Spencer: A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings.
Publication

[transcription]

Cat. 143
Alpine Landscape
1933

Stanley Spencer

Alpine Landscape, 1933



Modern British Art from the Permanent Collection

Publication

[transcription of excerpt]

Modern British Art from the Permanent Collection

The works on display represent a cross section of art produced in Britain in the modern period from 1900 to 1960. This was an important period for British art, one in which there was a struggle between tradition and innovation. European avant-garde ideas were embraced and the period between the two World Wars saw many changes in British art. More clearly discernible styles emerged and previously ignored influences from the continent (especially France) became evident. Fear of war led to insecurity and a consequent sense of chaos which provided new stimuli for artists. Alongside images of death and destruction, British romanticism as seen in the work of Graham Sutherland and Stanley Spencer, two of the most important artists in Britain at that time.

Stanley Spencer

Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), an idiosyncratic painter, held a prominent place in British art beginning in 1927. Although he attended the Slade from 1908-1912, where he became an accomplished draughtsman, Spencer seems to have remained quite unaffected by developments in British art. Spencer shared with his contemporaries a desire for the spirit of his subject, in his case his home town, Cookham, Berkshire. Spencer was a highly religious man who fused real experiences of actual places with personal interpretations of Biblical scenes. In 1933, he was invited to Saas Fee, a village in the Swiss Alps, where his host, Sir Edward Beddington-Behrens, felt he would be inspired by the religious communities living in these remote villages. *Alpine Landscape, (1933)* is quiet, solitary and almost lonely, mirroring Spencer's experience of painting which often involved him standing alone in a deserted landscape. There are no people in this painting, yet Spencer achieves a religious feeling through the prominence of the crucifix and the implication of people in the hut.

Further Reading

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Carline, Richard. *Stanley Spencer at War*. London: Faber and Faber, 1978.

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Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

Exhibition History

Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

Landscapes from the Permanent Collection. February 8, 1980 - April 20, 1980.

Cornerstones: Building a Collection. November 22, 1986 - March 29, 1987.

British Modern. March 12, 1988 - May 15, 1988.

Exploring the Collection: British Modern. December 11, 1993 - May 15, 1994.

Conflicting Views: Landscape Painting and the Founders' Collection. January 25, 1996 - May 5, 1996.

75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons. February 4, 2006 - May 14, 2006.

Selected Exhibitions outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Art Gallery of Toronto, Toronto. 1935.



Archival History

Charles Holmes Correspondence

Correspondence
1933-07-07

[transcription of excerpt]

PHOTOGRAPH
DON'T CRUSH OR BEND

H.A. Stone Esquire
Vancouver Art Gallery
1145 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Mr. Stone

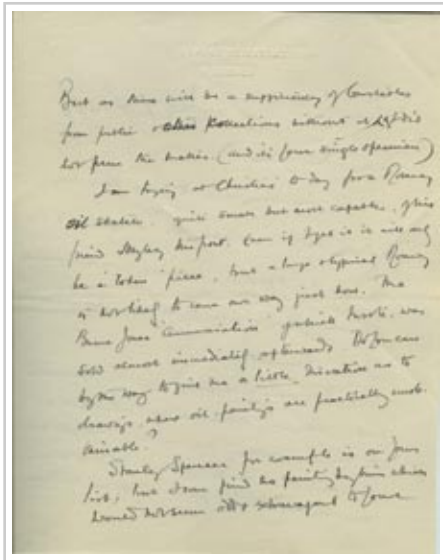
I was delighted to have your letter of June 20th and will open a special title as for the Hopper balance out quickly and propose to make all smaller purchases for the present.

There was a suggestion at the committee for the forthcoming exhibition of British art at the Royal Academy this winter that you be asked to allow the Constable study to remain here 'till next spring for inclusion in the show.

I am trying at Christies Wednesday for a Romney oil sketch, quite small but capable. Even if Fry will be a 'token piece' but a large typical Romney is nothing to come our way just now.

Stanley Spencer

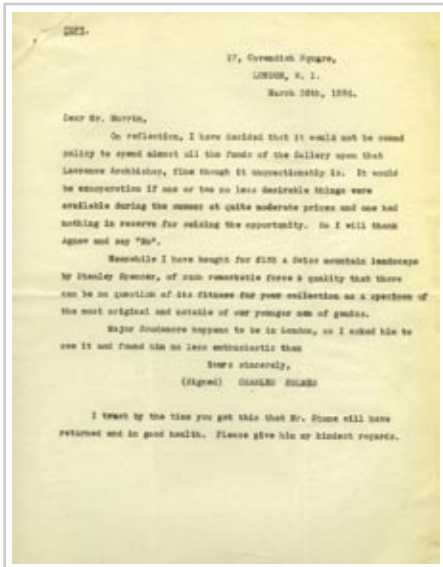
Alpine Landscape, 1933



The Burne-Jones was sold almost immediately afterwards. Do you care to give me a little direction as to drawings where oil paintings are practically most valuable?

Stanley Spencer for example is on our list but I can find no painting by him which does not seem oddly extravagant to your committee. But there are some quite admirable drawings which would represent him for the moment. I can find a recent Paul Nash which would really suit you. They have become mere geometry. I know of an earlier one in private possession which I might secure as the owner will be moving house, and is likely to consider it.

Meanwhile, for the modern I have bought a View in Provence from the Roger Fry Exhibition. He is such a prominent and influential figure in the art world that his work always has an interest, and this in my opinion is not the best thing he has ever painted, but a summary of what contemporary landscape is trying to do. I have also got a vivid little Pyrenees landscape by the late J.D. Innes. The remarkable genius who died young, I had to pay 95 pounds. The Fry was only 30 pounds. It will anyhow be necessary to a historical series as well as fresh and lively in themselves and make a pleasant contrast to the more sober examples of the 18th Century.



Charles Holmes Correspondence

Correspondence
1934-03-26

[transcription]

COPY

17, Cavendish Square,
LONDON, W. 1.

March 26th, 1934.

Dear Mr. Murrin,

On reflection, I have decided that it would not be sound policy to spend almost all the funds of the Gallery upon that Lawrence Archbishop, fine though it unquestionably is. It would be exasperation if one or two no less desirable things were available during the summer at quite moderate prices and one had nothing in reserve for seizing the opportunity. So I will thank Agnew and say "No".

Meanwhile I have bought for £135 a Swiss mountain landscape by Stanley Spencer, of such remarkable force & quality that there can be no question of its fitness for your collection as a specimen of the most original and notable of our younger men of genius.

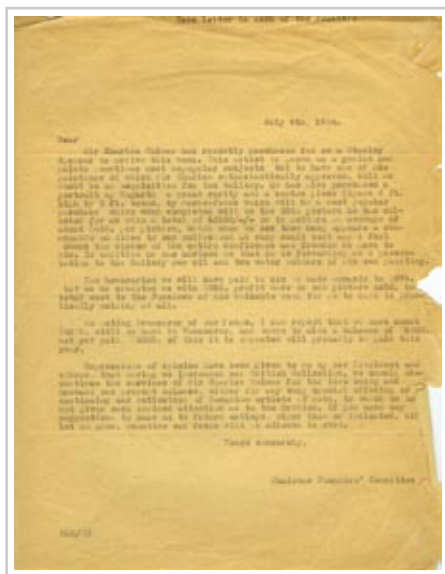
Major Scudamore happens to be in London, so I asked him to see it and found him no less enthusiastic than I.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) CHARLES HOLMES

I trust by the time you get this that Mr. Stone will have returned and in good health. Please give him my kindest regards.

Stanley Spencer

Alpine Landscape, 1933



Letter to the Founders

Correspondence
1934-07-06

[transcription]

Same letter to each of the Founders

July 6th 1934

Dear

Sir Charles Holmes recently purchased for us a Stanley Spencer to arrive this week. This artist is known as a genius and paints sometimes most unpopular subjects but to have one of his paintings of which Sir Charles enthusiastically approves will no doubt be an acquisition for the Gallery. He has also purchased a portrait by Hogarth a great rarity and a centre piece figure 6 ft. high by 2 ft. broad by Burne Jones which will be a most popular purchase which when completed will be the 25th picture he has selected for is wits total of £2100/- or in dollars average of about \$450. per picture which when we see them hung appears a remarkable addition to our collection at very small cost and I feel shows the wisdom of the entire confidence and freedom we gave to him. In addition he has advised me that he is forwarding as a presentation to the Gallery one oil and two water colours of his own painting

The honorarium we will have paid to him to date amounts to \$875 but as he credited us with \$850. profit made on one picture sold, the total cost to the Founders of his valuable work for on to date is practically nothing at all.

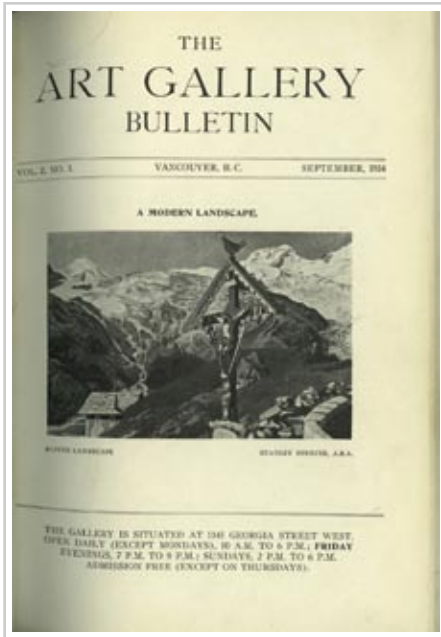
As acting Treasurer of our funds I can report that we have about \$4500. still on hand in Vancouver, and there is also a balance of \$5000 not yet paid \$2000. of this is expected to be paid this year.

Expressions of opinion have been given by our Board and others that having now increased our British Collection we should discontinue the services of Sir Charles Holmes for the time being and husband our present balance either far any very special offering or continuing our collection if Canadian artists of note, to thick we had not given such decided attention as to the British. If you have any suggestion to make as to future outlays, other than as indicated kindly let me know in the meantime our funds will be allowed to rest

Yours sincerely,

Chairman of Founders' Committee

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933



The Art Gallery Bulletin
 Miscellaneous History
 1934-09-01

[transcription of excerpt]

THE ART GALLERY BULLETIN
 VOL. 2 NO. 1
 VANCOUVER, B.C.
 SEPTEMBER, 1934
 A MODERN LANDSCAPE
 ALPINE LANDSCAPE
 STANLEY SPENCER, A.R.A.

THE ART GALLERY BULLETIN

"ALPINE LANDSCAPE"

By STANLEY SPENCER, A.R.A.

A notable addition to the Permanent Collection has been made by the Founders who recently gifted a painting by Mr. Stanley Spencer, A.R.A.

The painting was chosen for the Founders by Sir Charles Holmes, who showed considerable courage, perhaps unknowingly, in sending a mountain picture to Vancouver. To send mountains to Vancouver is a bit like sending coals to Newcastle, for, of course, we think we know our mountains, as we should, when our Province contains about twelve Switzerlands within its borders.

The name of Stanley Spencer recalls various controversies over works exhibited in England during the last twenty to twenty-five years. Stanley Spencer's works have two qualities that challenge-one, religions and the other, distortion. In art, perhaps these two qualities must inevitably walk together for harmony.

Spencer's work shows little or no trace of modern French influence, and the titles if many of his important works show his belief in a subject-matter strongly religious. These religious subjects are all set in surroundings of an English countryside, of which he is a devout lover.

In the Vancouver example of his art, Spencer is portraying not the landscape of England but the Swiss mountains and it is interesting to note that even here the New Testament enters,

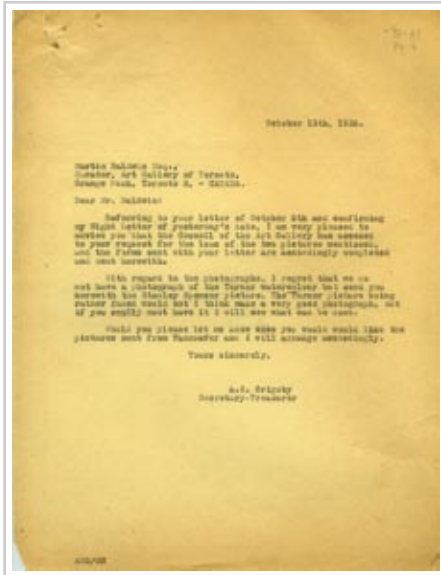
Stanley Spencer has the imaginative power to dramatize the simple and the commonplace, and we may be reasonably certain he had some emotion to express concerning the relationship between the Christ on the Cross and the cold loneliness of the mountain tops that serve as a setting.

The forms in this picture are realistic and minute in treatment and not at all the Spencer who will brave distortion of forms in order to give power to his symbols or increase the pattern quality of his work.

In colour he has worked within an extremely limited scheme, again perhaps, more fully to express his meaning; certainly the restricted palette has taken joy of colour, as such, out of it, yet it is not devoid of colour interest, for the tones are most satisfyingly related. It is this harmony of tonal areas which gives the picture unity rather than any quality of atmospheric envelopment; indeed atmosphere, as the impressionists construed the term, is almost completely absent. Altogether a very steady and satisfying canvas ma personal artist, and a distinguished addition to our British Collection.



Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933



Art Gallery of Toronto Loan

Correspondence
1935-10-13

[transcription]

October 13, 1935

Martin Baldwin Esq.,
Curator, Art Gallery of Toronto
Grange Park, Toronto 2 - Canada

Dear Mr. Baldwin:

Referring to your letter of October 5th and confirming my Night Letter of yesterday's date, I am very pleased to advise you that the Council of the Art Gallery has acceded to your request for the loan of the two pictures mentioned, and the forms sent with your letter are accordingly complete and sent herewith.

With regard to the photographs, I regret that we do not have a photograph of the Turner watercolour but send you herewith the Stanley Spencer picture. The Turner picture being rather faded would not I think make a very good photograph, but if you really must have it I will see what can be done.

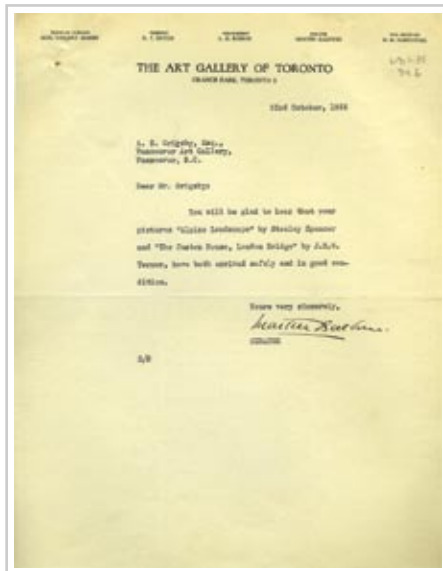
Would you please let me know when you would like the pictures sent from Vancouver and I will arrange accordingly.

Yours Sincerely,

A.S. Grigsby
Secretary-Treasurer

[31.35, 34.6 in pencil]

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933



Art Gallery of Toronto Loan
Correspondence
1935-10-23

[transcription]

The Art Gallery of Toronto
Grange Park, Toronto 2

23rd October, 1935

A.S. Grigsby, Esq.,
Vancouver Art Gallery,
Vancouver, B.C.

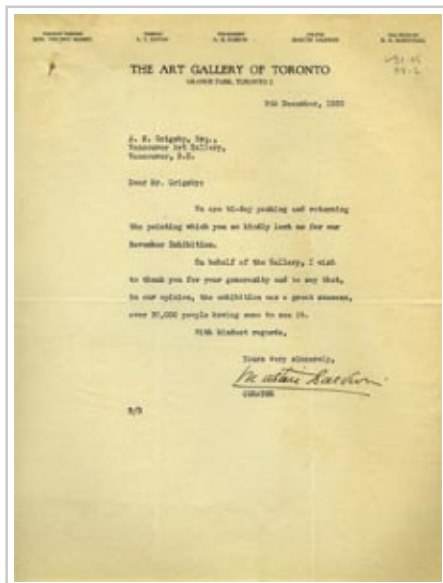
Dear Mr. Grigsby:

You will be glad to hear that your pictures "Alpine Landscape" by Stanley Spencer and "The Custom House, London Bridge" by J.M.W. Turner, have both arrived safely and in good condition.

Yours very sincerely,

[Martin Baldwin signed in ink]
Curator

[31.35, 34.6 in pencil]



Art Gallery of Toronto Loan
Correspondence
1935-12-09

[transcription]

The Art Gallery of Toronto
Grange Park, Toronto 2

9th December, 1935

A.S. Grigsby, Esq.,
Vancouver Art Gallery,
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Mr. Grigsby:

We are to-day packing and returning the painting which you so kindly lent us for our November Exhibition.

On behalf of the Gallery, I wish to thank you for your generosity and to say that, in our opinion, the exhibition was a great success, over 32,000 people having come to see it.

With kindest regards,

Yours very sincerely,

[Martin Baldwin signed in ink]
Curator

Stanley Spencer
Alpine Landscape, 1933

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