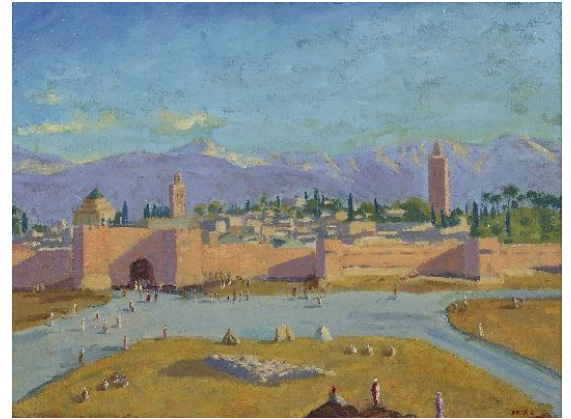


## **Winston Churchill: The Painter**

**23 May – 29 November 2026**



**Opening in spring 2026, the Wallace Collection presents a major retrospective of Sir Winston Churchill's (1874-1965) paintings – the first substantial UK exhibition devoted to his art since his death.**

Bringing together more than 50 works – around half from private collections that are rarely accessible to the public – this exhibition will shed new light on a world-famous figure who was defined by politics but sustained by a lifelong passion for painting.

Churchill began painting in 1915, at a moment of personal and national crisis. What started as a private refuge after the Dardanelles catastrophe of World War I, became a lasting creative discipline. Over the next five decades he produced more than five hundred canvases, painting wherever he travelled: in England, France, Italy and, most famously, under the intense light of Marrakech.

Following a chronological approach, *Winston Churchill: The Painter* traces Churchill's artistic journey from tentative beginnings to bold, late works, revealing a painter of surprising range. Visitors will encounter sombre wartime scenes and radiant Mediterranean harbours, alongside tightly observed still-lives and the luminous Moroccan cityscapes he painted as diplomatic gifts.

Churchill's own paintings will be complemented by a small group of works by his artistic mentors and friends, including Sir John Lavery (1856-1941) and Sir William Nicholson (1872-1949), which will help visitors to explore his artistic development and influences. Alongside these works, the exhibition will unfold the key thematic threads that shaped Churchill's creative life, including the influence of Walter Sickert (1860-1942) who encouraged Churchill to experiment with novel techniques.

Early portraits painted in Lavery's studio and the rare 'war pictures' made on the front line in Belgium capture both the bleak mood of wartime Britain and the tentative steps of an amateur artist learning his craft. These will be followed by Churchill's deeply personal views of his beloved Chartwell, and the gardens and interiors of friends' country houses – contemplative spaces in which he found respite from public pressures. The exhibition will showcase a large group of works from Chartwell, now managed by the National Trust, a major lender to the exhibition.

As visitors move through the exhibition, the story will widen to Churchill's fascination with still-life painting, informed by the close encouragement of Nicholson. Here, reflective silverware, bottles and ceramics reveal his pleasure in composition, colour and texture. The exhibition then shifts to the bright landscapes of Southern Europe: the harbours, coastal towns and villas of the French Riviera, Italy and the Atlantic coast, painted with rich colour and energetic brushwork.

Churchill's profound attachment to Morocco will be explored, with the celebrated Marrakech scenes of Hotel Mamounia, the Koutoubia Mosque and the Atlas Mountains, painted with an exuberance and confidence that mark the high point of his artistic maturity. In these works, which he considered as the best he had done yet, Churchill explores the chromatic contrast between the arid plain, the greens of the foliage and the snow-capped mountains beyond. Churchill made six visits to Marrakech from 1935 to 1959, and in January 1943, famously persuaded US President Roosevelt (1882-1945) to travel there with him. The painting he made for the President during that trip was the only one he created during World War II.

A key theme of the exhibition will be Churchill's evolving relationship with the Royal Academy and other artistic institutions in both the UK and the USA. Invited by the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Alfred Munnings (1878-1959) to submit paintings for the Summer Exhibition in 1947, Churchill put forward two works (both featuring in the new exhibition) into the 'outsider' category, under the pseudonym David Winter. When his identity was later revealed, he was celebrated as the first Prime Minister to be exhibited at the Royal Academy and, the following year, was elected Honorary Academician Extraordinary in recognition of his '*eminent services to our Realm and People, and ... achievements in the Art of Painting*'. This prestigious title conferred on him the right to exhibit at the annual Summer Exhibition, which he did until 1951.

The most recent major retrospective of Churchill's paintings took place in 1958, conceived and organised with the support of US President Dwight Eisenhower (1890-1969) and Hallmark founder J.C. Hall (1891-1982). It toured North America, New Zealand and Australia (known as the world tour); a version of this show then opened at the Royal Academy in 1959. *Winston Churchill: The Painter* is the first major retrospective of Churchill's art in more than 60 years.

The relationship between the Wallace Collection and Churchill dates back to the Second World War when, in 1942, the museum hosted the Artists Aid Russia exhibition, which was staged to raise funds for his wife Clementine Churchill's (1885-1977) *Aid to Russia* Fund. This parallel story will be the focus of a free display, *The Wallace Collection at War* (15 April–25 October 2026), timed to coincide with the exhibition.

Dr Lucy Davis, Curator of Paintings and co-curator of the exhibition, says: "*Churchill approached painting with an intensity that mirrored his political life, though he turned to the canvas for very different reasons. What emerges is a painter who begins cautiously, inspired by Lavery and Nicholson, and who ends up forging a surprisingly bold visual language of his own. This exhibition lets visitors see the private creative dynamics behind the public figure.*"

Dr Xavier Bray, Director of the Wallace Collection and co-curator of the exhibition, says: "*Churchill's paintings reveal a personality that is more joyful and more intimate than the statesman we think we know. The Wallace Collection played a quiet, but significant, role in the Churchills' wartime story, and we are proud to offer this deeper portrait of the great wartime leader. It is a reminder that creativity can be both a personal solace and cultural force, and that even a figure as monumental as Churchill found renewal in front of a canvas.*"

The exhibition has been organised with the generous support of the Churchill family and Churchill Heritage Ltd. We extend our deepest gratitude to David and Molly Lowell Borthwick for their transformative contribution.



It has been made possible by the [Blavatnik Family Foundation](#). We are thankful to Kathryn Uhde, and other donors for their additional support to the exhibition. The Wallace Collection is grateful to the *Friends of Churchill: The Painter* and, in particular, to Marilyn and Lawrence Friedland and the Zarnegin family (Beverly Hills, CA).

Exhibition Sponsor: Hallmark  
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A richly illustrated book accompanying the exhibition includes essays by leading Churchill scholars on subjects including Churchill's painting technique, his relationship with the artistic establishment, and the interplay between his artistic and political lives. The catalogue is generously supported by The Elizabeth Cayzer Charitable Trust.

### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

#### **[HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)**

- Sir Winston Churchill, *La Dragonnière, Cap Martin* C267, 1930s. Private Collection. © Churchill Heritage Ltd. Photograph by Howard Agriesti
- Sir Winston Churchill, *The Tower of the Koutoubia Mosque* C381, 1943. Private Collection. © Churchill Heritage Ltd. Image courtesy Churchill Heritage Ltd
- Sir Winston Churchill, *Jug and Bottles* C176, 1930s. Private Collection. © Churchill Heritage Ltd. Image courtesy Sotheby's

### **About the Wallace Collection**

As one of Britain's preeminent cultural institutions, the Wallace Collection is home to one of the most significant ensembles of fine and decorative arts in the world. Highlights include oil paintings from the 14th to the late 19th centuries by artists such as Titian, Velázquez, Rubens and Van Dyck; princely arms and armour; and one of the finest collections of 18th-century French paintings and decorative arts. Visitors can also enjoy superb medieval and Renaissance objects, including Limoges enamel, maiolica, glass and bronzes. Displayed at Hertford House, former home to Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, this outstanding collection is displayed in a manner designed to evoke the lives and tastes of its founders, creating a special ambiance that remains an essential part of its charm.

[www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org)

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