

Gulls on Leisure Isle Knysna, South Africa

Terence Tenison Cuneo (1907-1996)



REF:

Description

Oil On Canvas Signed & dated 1972, lower left 51.3 x 76.2 cms (20 x 30 ins)

This beautiful painting of Gulls is painted on Leisure Isle, one of two island suburbs of Knysna, 6 kms from the centre. Leisure Isle is surrounded on all sides by waters of the tidal Knysna estuary, ringed by a chain of hills, clearly seen in the painting. This is likely to have been painted in the north of the Isle which has a large open area of grassland, small copses of bush and indigenous trees with stretches of salt marsh, attracting much bird life to the area. Since Cuneo painted this work in 1972, the area has since become the Steenbok Nature Reserve. It is the pearl of the scenic garden route which sits between George and Plettenberg Bay, in the Western Province of South Africa. Terence Cuneo was born in London in 1907, son of American-born Cyrus and Nell Cuneo, artists, who met whilst studying with Whistler in Paris. His father died when Terence was a mere 10 years old, but by then young Terence already had experience in the artist's studio. Nell moved to Cornwall where her son spent a happy childhood. From Cornwall, he was sent to boarding school at the Sutton Valance School in Kent. He then studied art at the Chelsea Polytechnic and the Slade School of Art before becoming a commercial artist, following in his father's footsteps. He worked in the late 1920s and 1930s as an illustrator for magazines, books and periodicals. He worked for companies such as Shell Oil and London Transport Executive. In 1936 Cuneo started working in oils. During World War II, Cuneo served as a sapper in the Royal Engineers. His talent was recognised by the Army and he was commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee to illustrate tank and aircraft factories. After the war, Cuneo was commissioned to produce a series of works illustrating railways, bridges and locomotives. He had the ability to capture the power and movement of steam locomotives as well as illustrating the action of military campaigns with great attention to detail and realism. Well known works are "The Battle of Waterloo", "Battle of Britain" and "The Last Train to Weymouth". His commercial works of this time adorned Director's offices and Boardrooms, as well as illustrating calendars and company publications. A significant point in his career, bringing his name to the public, worldwide, was when he was appointed the official artist for the Coronation of Elizabeth II. This led to other portraits including Field Marshal Montgomery and, as his popularity grew, he was much revered by his peers and admired by the public. Although Cuneo is best known for his works on engineering subjects, it cannot be overlooked as to the wide range of paintings and subjects he produced during his lifetime. This included portraits, equestrian portraits, landscapes and big game in Africa as well as his works of manufacturing, engineering and mineral extraction. It is estimated that he painted more than 7,000 works during his lifetime, illustrating this versatile range. Whilst enjoying some time at home, a cat brought in a dead mouse, which he began to sketch. This led to his "signature" mouse work in his paintings. From 1954 onwards many works inc...