

Stern Pissarro Gallery

66 St. James's Street, London SW1A 1NE, UK
stern@pissarro.com www.pissarro.art



ALEXANDER CALDER
(1898 - 1976)

McGovern

Gouache on paper
76 x 56 cm (29⁷/₈ x 22 inches)
Signed and dated upper right, AC 72

Provenance

Collection of George J. Goodstadt, acquired from the artist

Literature

This work has been registered in the archives of the Calder Foundation, New York, under application number A26042.

This vibrant gouache of Calder's owes its origin to the 1972 Presidential Election between Republican candidate Richard Nixon and Democratic candidate George McGovern. In the run-up to the election, Calder worked closely with the influential printer-publisher George Goodstadt, who had been commissioned by the Democratic National Committee, to produce a series of large colourful gouaches, to which this work pertains, which were subsequently reprinted as campaign posters in support of McGovern.

The piece is a testament to Calder's long-standing political activism and his liberal political views. Like many other members of the art establishment, Calder supported McGovern for his anti-Vietnam War political platform and his advocacy of reduced defence spending. Alongside other high-profile artists who created works to show their support for McGovern's campaign, including Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol, Calder's five gouaches succeeded in both raising money and drawing media attention to McGovern's campaign. Calder's influence on the campaign had a tangible effect when the slogan for one of his gouaches, "McGovern for McGovern" was then used on buttons and bumper stickers. Perhaps as a statement of his support and faith in McGovern, Calder post-dated the gouaches for the day of the election, the 7th November 1972.

Calder's "McGovern" series coincided with an explosion of political artistic expression in the form of campaign posters by artists across the US, which acted as a grassroots movement in support of the Democratic candidate. The artists created simple, well-designed posters and were determined to garner support for the candidate for peace and change. These posters adorned the walls of McGovern campaign offices across the country and were often sold at auction in Art for McGovern galleries in various cities to raise money for the campaign. This period of political artistic activity was truly remarkable and would remain unrivalled until the burst of campaign posters during Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign.

