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JAMES WALLACE

Blyth 1872 - 1911 Berwick

Autumn in Kensington Gardens

Signed lower right: *J. Wallace*; signed and inscribed on a label attached to the reverse: '*Autumn in / Kensington Gardens / James Wallace / 2 Studio / 4a Cheyne Row / Chelsea...*'

Oil on canvas: 26 ¼ x 40 in / 66.7 x 101.6 cm

Frame size: 34 x 48 in / 86.4 x 121.9 cm



Painted *circa* 1904-1910

Provenance:

Phillips, Scotland, 9th November 1980, lot 44

Richard Green & Spink & Sons, London, acquired from the above

Private collection, 1983

Christie's London, 26th November 1999, lot 89

Christopher Wood, London, acquired from the above

Private collection, London

Exhibited:

Glasgow, The Royal Institute of the Fine Arts, 1910, no.190 (£63)

Striding across the grass through elegant avenues of magnificent trees, two attractive Edwardian nannies and their dynamic young charges take the bright, crisp air of a picturesque autumn day in Kensington Gardens. Equipped with ball and hoop for rolling (or trundling), the young girls evoke the vitality of the scene, one stretching ahead and down to recapture her ball in motion, the other leaning back, left leg aloft, in the opposite direction. In contrast, sitting beneath the nearest tree a more sedentary group of caretakers rest with a small child and perambulator. With beautiful naturalism and a soft luminosity that distinctly marks the season, Wallace illuminates turning leaves and patches of soft grass with dappled sunlight, scattering fallen flecks of gold, burnt sienna and umber.

One of London's eight Royal Parks covering an area of 265 acres, Kensington Gardens remains a beautiful balance of green space, art and architecture, incorporating Kensington Palace, the Albert Memorial and the Serpentine Galleries, as well as public sculptures including the beloved bronze statue of fictional resident, Peter Pan. Inspired by daily walks there, author JM Barrie wrote *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* in 1906, offering a 'Grand Tour' of the park in intricate detail

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

from the perspective of a child: ‘The Gardens are a tremendous big place, with millions and hundreds of trees... There is almost nothing that has such a keen sense of fun as a fallen leaf.’¹ Barrie later commissioned Sir George Frampton to create one of the park’s best-loved sculptures, unveiled in 1912.

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Regrettably little is known about the Northumbrian artist James Wallace, who is believed to have been taught by his father, the artist James Wallace (1841-1911), at the Corporation Academy or Berwick Art School, Berwick-upon-Tweed. He exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts, London from 1899–1911, as well as the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh and the Glasgow Institute. By 1910, he was living at the family home, known as ‘The Walls in Berwick-upon-Tweed, but moved back to London to look after his father, who died a year later. Tragically, his son barely outlived him.

The work of James Wallace is represented at Berwick Museum & Art Gallery.

¹ J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens with drawings by Arthur Rackham*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1906, p.2, p.6.