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# Rarely seen Walter Sickert painting to go on sale in London

The British artist’s oil, depicting a bored couple, is being offered by the gallery Piano Nobile as part of a selling exhibition

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Walter Sickert, *Ennui*, derives from the collection of the late American collectors Herbert and Ann Lucas  
Courtesy of Piano Nobile

A very rarely seen painting by the British artist Walter Sickert, which was once owned by the Hollywood “gangster” actor Edward G. Robinson, is going on sale in London on 26 September. *Ennui* (1913) is one of five Sickert oils of the same name that were made in the 1910s—each depicting a pub landlord with his wife.

Three of the works are held by British galleries. These include one owned by the Royal Collection, which is such a favourite of King Charles that it hangs in his private rooms in Clarence House, and another at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The other two have for decades remained in private hands.

The work coming up for sale, in a selling exhibition at Piano Nobile gallery in Holland Park, belonged to the late American collectors Herbert and Ann Lucas from 2001—and has not been exhibited since that date. Previous owners include Robinson, known for playing mobsters in films such as *Little Caesar* (1931).

The painting has a price tag “in the region of £750,000”, a gallery spokesperson says, and it is expected to be the star of the show. Other works for sale from the Lucas collection include a Sickert pastel of a naked sex worker, which has not been displayed publicly since 1908.

Sickert and the writer Viginia Woolf had an exchange about the Ashmolean’s version of *Ennui* after Woolf saw it. The novelist then wrote a pamphlet about the painting, referring to the publican and his wife as having ”the accumulated weariness of innumerable days which had discharged its burden on them”, and then ”how dull minutes are mounting, old matches accumulating along with dirty glasses and a dead cigar”.

On sale too are several key Sickert works deriving from his eight-year stay in Dieppe, from 1898 to 1906, after his divorce. Among them are his painting of Eglise St Jacques in Dieppe, plus five sketches of the church. Sickert—who was born in Germany before coming to England in 1868—so loved Dieppe that at the start of the First World War he wrote to Winston Churchill, then the UK’s First Lord of the Admiralty, to ask for help in protecting it from German attack. Sickert began teaching Churchill to paint in the early 1920s.

The Lucas collection includes more than 60 Sickert prints, works or paper and a few sketches, showing how the artist developed subject matters.