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William Crozier HRHA (1930-2011)

THE RIVER IN THE WOOD, 1991

oil on canvas

signed lower left; signed again, titled and dated on reverse; with inscribed label also on reverse
24 by 30in. (60.96 by 76.20cm)

The River in the Wood shows William Crozier engaging with two of his favourite motifs – the tree and the river. Scottish by birth, later becoming an Irish citizen, Crozier's landscapes avoid any of the characteristics of national stereotype. Crozier settled in West Cork in 1983 although he continued to travel and work abroad. His vibrant, almost abstract paintings of the landscape of West Cork, such as this example, were a revelation when they came to wider public attention in Ireland after a retrospective of Crozier's work at the RHA Gallery in 1991. Jim O'Driscoll, a native of West Cork, clearly recognised the novelty of Crozier's engagement with the locality. He was an important collector of his work.

In *The River in the Wood* strong vivid colours are applied directly onto the white primed canvas, visible in the red branches of the trees to the right. Using a flattened perspective, Crozier creates a rich varied surface of competing forms, juxtaposing the rushing flow of the river and the vertical shapes of the trees. The blue water severs the composition separating an island of deep red and green trees from a sunlit group of pale green and

orange woods to the left. The latter introduce a subtle sense of movement into the composition in contrast to the more dynamic form of the river.

This work, like other paintings by Crozier, is deceptively simple in its construction. However the careful selection of colours and control of form reflect a deep understanding of both historical and modern European art. It evokes the iridescence of Gothic stained glass as well as the expressionist vigour of French Fauvism. The work is a direct response to nature. As Crozier declared, 'I cannot invent anything. I've got to see it'.¹ The painting is then made in the studio directly on the canvas, without preliminary drawings. Through this intuitive approach, the final work becomes an internalised response to not just a specific location but to a particular moment and to the combination of psychological and physical forces which influenced Crozier while painting it. One of his stated aims in creating a painting was to 'invest it with an epic quality'.² The understated yet dramatic combinations of forms and colours make *The River in the Wood* such an epic landscape.

Dr. Róisín Kennedy
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¹ Quoted in P. Vann, 'A Man of Imagination', in ed. C. Crouan, *William Crozier*, Lund Humphries, 2007, p.20.

² Ibid, p.39.

€10,000-€15,000 (£8,196-£12,295 approx).