

Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd **Recent Acquisitions 2023**





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RECENT ACQUISITIONS 2023



This is the first catalogue we have produced since 2020 and is designed to coincide with the welcome return of The Winter Show at the Park Avenue Armory in January 2023 and TEFAF Maastricht in March. Despite the long shadow of Covid 19, our activities have gone from strength to strength and we record some of the significant works that we have sold over the past two years at the back of this catalogue.

This catalogue is filled with works that have beguiled, moved or intrigued us. Some are exciting new discoveries, such as the magnificent large drawing by John Flaxman of a sarcophagus, a drawing commissioned by Edward Knight and unrecorded since 1791. Or the magnificent rediscovered painting by Joseph Wright of Derby *A Hermit*, painted in Liverpool whilst Wright was in the midst of making his great sequence of candlelight compositions, it offers a fresh perspective on one of the most enigmatic of British eighteenth-century painters. Others are established masterpieces, such as the exquisite oil by J.M.W. Turner of *Bonneville*, made by Turner after his first trip to the Continent in 1802 and his first sight of the Alps, it was commissioned by Turner's greatest patron, Walter Fawkes and hung originally at Farnley Hall.

Whilst we work in a comparatively narrow field, the breadth of works in this catalogue demonstrates the richness of our specialisation. As in other years, we have foregrounded the work of neglected female artists. The penetrating bust by Anne Seymour Damer raises – and we hope answers – the vexed issue of whether she herself carved works in marble, surely it is a resounding 'yes', placing her as one of the only professional female sculptors working in marble in eighteenth-century Europe. This contrasts with the monumental cartoon by Edward Armitage of corpses in the ravine at Inkerman. This unbelievably poignant work was praised in the contemporary press, with one writer noting: '[I]t speaks to us in a more dreadful whisper of the horrors of war than all the peace speeches ever made.' With the spectre of war once more in the Crimea this powerful work assumes chilling contemporary relevance.

As always our activities have been greatly helped by the generosity of the community of scholars who share our interests. This catalogue, and so much else besides, would not be possible without the tireless work of Cressida St Aubyn.

LOWELL LIBSON & JONNY YARKER

RICHARD WILSON 1713/1–1782

THE VALLEY OF THE RIVER SEVERN WITH A DISTANT VIEW OF SHREWSBURY

Oil on canvas
20 × 37¼ inches · 508 × 946mm
c.1744–45

COLLECTIONS

Possibly John Charles Middleton (1757–1793);
Revd Frederick Matthews Middleton (1831–
1904), grandson of the above;
Col. E. F. Hall, Red House, Chilworth, Romsey,
Hampshire, son-in-law of the above;
Hall sale Christie's, 19 July, 1929, Lot 49, bought
by Spink, London;
Arthur Tooth & Sons Ltd., London, 1931;
Knoedler & Co., 15 Old Bond Street, London W1,
1932 (#1270);
Harcourt Johnstone (1895–1945), London;
Johnstone sale, Sotheby's, 12 June, 1940, lot 142,
bought by Tooth;
Sir Stephenson Kent (1897–1989), Chapelwood
Manor, Nutley;
Mrs. C.K. Prestige;
Prestige sale, Sotheby's, 3 April, 1968, lot 62;
The City Gallery London, 1968;
Major T.C. Harvey, acquired from the above,
to 1982;
Christie's, 16 April, 1982, Lot 59;
Christie's, 7 July, 2010, Lot 165 (£55,250);
W. Eugene Johnston III, Greensboro, North
Carolina (d.2018);
Leland Little, Hillsborough, NC, 11 June, 2022,
lot 236;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

W. G. Constable, *Richard Wilson*, 1953, p.235,
pl. 139C;
Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *Richard Wilson Online
Catalogue Raisonné*, Paul Mellon Centre, cat.
no.P13

This fluid landscape was painted by Richard Wilson in the first phase of his career, showing a scene on the River Severn close to Wilson's native Wales. In the 1740s Wilson was one of the foremost landscape painters in Britain. In 1746 Wilson contributed two landscape roundels to the Foundling Hospital, joining works by William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough and Thomas Hudson. The present panoramic view belongs to a small group of rococo topographical landscapes that Wilson made before he travelled to Italy in 1751, they show in embryo all the characteristics which would make Wilson one of the most significant figures in British landscape painting in the eighteenth century.

Richard Wilson was born in mid-Wales, into a well-connected gentry family. In 1729 he went to train in London with the portrait painter Thomas Wright. It was as a portraitist that Wilson first practiced, although by the mid-1740s he was turning increasingly to landscape. In 1744 Wilson completed a grand, panoramic view of *Westminster Bridge* (Tate Gallery, London). The painting, which shows the new Westminster Bridge under construction, is a light filled cityscape, much in the manner of contemporary Venetian painters such as Canaletto. Although the latter did not arrive in London until 1746, his works were familiar in Britain and Wilson's bright palette and careful composition suggest he was aware of Canaletto's work, down to the boat in the foreground, which has the look of a Venetian gondola. As David Solkin has pointed out Wilson's landscapes of the 1740s are characteristic products of the English rococo, as such they show the profound influence of not only Italian art, but French painters, who Wilson would



Richard Wilson
The Thomas Coram Foundling Hospital
Oil on canvas · 20¾ inches · 530 mm diameter · c.1746
© Coram in the care of the Foundling Museum /
Bridgeman Images





Richard Wilson *Caernarvon Castle*
 Oil on canvas · 32½ × 45 inches · 826 × 1143 mm · c.1744
 Detroit Institute of Arts,
 Founders Society Purchase, Robert H. Tannahill
 Foundation Fund, Joseph H. Parsons Fund, et al., 1998.1.
 © Bridgeman images

undoubtedly have encountered at the first St Martin's Lane Academy.¹

Our painting shares the same pastel palette and creamy texture of paint with *Westminster Bridge* and other early landscapes. In another painting of the same period *Caernarvon Castle*, now in the Detroit Institute of Arts, Wilson shows an artist at work recording the great fortification on the River Seiont in northwest Wales. As many commentators have pointed out, Wilson has transformed the castle from a substantial architectural structure to a picturesque ruin, altering details to fit a compositional format derived from the classical works of Claude and Gaspard Dughet. The pastoral message of such landscapes has been much discussed, it is clear Wilson was invested in producing canvases which showed a contented, orderly

Britain for his patrician patrons. The present painting shows a leisurely river scene, a seated figure in the foreground is shown fishing, identifiable as a gentleman in a tricorne hat, this painting celebrates angling for sport, rather than subsistence. The flat, sun-drenched landscape captures the bend in a large river, crossed by a five arch stone bridge in the middle distance, with a town shown on the horizon. The precise location has not been definitively identified, although the suggestion that it depicts the River Severn at Atcham in Shropshire with Shrewsbury in the distance seems highly likely. Shrewsbury would have been a major stop for Wilson on any journeys he took to stay with his family in North Wales and Cheshire.

Painted with remarkable brio, Wilson has used a thickly loaded brush pushing

the paint to the edge of each stroke to form thick ridges of impasto. Nowhere is this more evident than in the breezy sky and rapidly worked copse of trees. Technically this painting is close to works by Thomas Gainsborough of the same date, Wilson would certainly have known Gainsborough's work and the comparison is suggestive. Whilst there is no eighteenth-century provenance for the painting, it is notable that the first recorded owner was the great grandson of Francis Beckford, brother of William 'Alderman' Beckford and uncle of William Beckford, both of whom owned works by Wilson.²

NOTES

1. David Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, exh. cat. London (Tate Gallery), 1983, p.147.
2. Other paintings consigned by Colonel E. F. Hall to Christie's in 1929 had come from his father-in-law, Frederick Middleton, who was Francis Beckford's grandson. For example George Stubbs's *Lord Torrington's hunt servants setting out from Southill, Bedfordshire* which had been acquired by Beckford's son-in-law John Charles Middleton at Christie's in 1787. See Judy Egerton, *George Stubbs, Painter*, New Haven and London, 2007 p.275.



THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH 1727–1788

AN OPEN LANDSCAPE WITH RESTING DROVERS

Thinned oil paint and watercolour with white lead on paper prepared with a red ground, varnished
15¾ × 20¼ inches · 400 × 514 mm
Painted early 1770s

COLLECTIONS

Private collection, 1980;
Phillips, 11 November 1980, lot 61;
Leslie Porter, acquired through Lowell Libson at the above sale, to 1998;
Spink-Leger Pictures, 1998,
Jeffrey Berenson, acquired from the above, to 2014;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd
Private collection, UK, acquired from the above, to 2022

LITERATURE

John Hayes, 'Gainsborough Drawings: A Supplement to the Catalogue Raisonné', *Master Drawings*, vol.XXI, no.4, 1983, no.924;
Hugh Belsey, 'A Second Supplement to John Hayes's The Drawings of Thomas Gainsborough', *Master Drawings*, vol.XLVI, no.4, 2008, no.924;
Marlies Enklaar & Sander Paarlberg (ed), *In the Light of Cuyp: Aelbert Cuyp & Gainsborough*, Constable, Turner, exhibition catalogue, 2021, pp.108, 122–3
Exhibited: London, Anthony Dallas & Son Ltd, *English Landscape Paintings*, 1983, no.1 (on loan);
London, Spink-Leger, *Master Drawings 17th to 20th Century*, 1998, no.15;
Dordrecht, Museum, *In the Light of Cuyp: Aelbert Cuyp & Gainsborough*, Constable, Turner, 2021–22, no.37

This refined varnished mixed-media work was made by Gainsborough in Bath in the early 1770s; an experimental process, these rapidly worked, highly evocative sheets underline Gainsborough's deeply personal engagement with the processes of landscape drawing. These drawings also acted as vehicles for his experimentation with both techniques and materials. The method used in this particular drawing was outlined in a letter which gives a sense of his innovation. In the present drawing Gainsborough has matched technical invention with a novelty of approach, Gainsborough has created an almost abstract composition, where abbreviated forms are used to suggest an open landscape under an open sky. We know from contemporaries that these ambiguous drawings, devoid of specific narrative, were highly prized by collectors and keenly discussed as works imbued with feeling. This large, varnished sheet, belongs to a particularly important and well documented group of Gainsborough's landscape drawings and is an unusually bold and attractive example.

Gainsborough's own description of producing varnished drawings such as this, is contained in a letter dated 29 January 1773 written to his friend William Jackson. Jackson, an amateur landscape painter himself, had evidently asked for Gainsborough for his method. Gainsborough warned him that: 'There is no Man living that you can mentions (besides your self and one more, living) that shall ever know my secret of making those studies you mention.'¹ He then explained: *take half a sheet of blotting paper such as the Clerks and those that keep books put upon*

writing instead of sand; 'tis a spongy purple paper. Paste that and half a sheet of white paper, of the same size, together, let them dry, and in that state keep them for use – take a Frame of deal about two Inches larger every way, and paste, or glue, a few sheets of very large substantial paper, no matter what sort, thick brown, blue, or any; then cut out a square half an inch less than the size of your papers for Drawing; so that it may serve for a perpetual stretching Frame or your Drawings; that is to say after you have dip't your drawings as I shall by & by direct in a liquid, in that wet state you are to take, and run some hot glue and with a brush run round the border of your stretcher, gluing about half an Inch broad which is to receive your half an Inch extraordinary allow'd for the purpose in your drawing paper, so that when that dries, it may be like a drum. Now before you do any thing by way of stretching, make the black & white of your drawing, the Effect I mean, & disposition in rough, Indian Ink shadows & your lights of Bristol made white lead which you buy in lumps at any house painters; saw it the size you want for your white chalk, the Bristol is harder and more the temper of chalk than the London. When you see your Effect, dip it all over in skim'd milk; put it wet on [your] Frame (just glued as before observed to) let it dry, and then you correct your [illegible] with Indian Ink & if you want to add more lights, or other, do it and dip again, till all your Effect is to your mind; then tinge in your greens your browns with sap green & Bistre, your yellows with Gall stone & blues with fine Indigo.²

Gainsborough finally observed *varnish it 3 times with Spirit Varnish such as I sent you; though only Mastic & Venice Turpentine is sufficient, then cut out your drawing but observe it must be Varnished both sides to keep it flat.*





Thomas Gainsborough *Rocky landscape with cattle*
Black chalk, watercolour and oil, varnished
8 7/8 x 12 inches · 213 x 306 mm · 1770–75
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Thomas Gainsborough *A herdsman with three cows by an upland pool*
Watercolour, ink and oil paint heightened with Bristol lead white
8 7/8 x 12 5/16 inches · 219 x 313 mm
Cleveland Museum of Art (formerly with Lowell Libson Ltd)

The present sheet, probably made in about 1772, precisely represents this process. The letter is remarkable because it suggests both Gainsborough's level of inventiveness, awareness of materials – note his use of paper not designed for drawing – and pursuit of innovative techniques to create novel effects in his landscape compositions. Gainsborough prepared a rich brown paper and then built up the composition, first adding the lead white, to lay in the cattle, seated figures and the suggestion of the landscape and tree. As the letter suggests this was not chalk, technical analysis undertaken by Jonathan Derow of other varnished drawings has proved that it was dry white pigment, consistent with the Bristol lead white mentioned by Gainsborough.³ The drawing could then be dipped in milk and washes applied to build up the landscape. This gradual process can be seen in the two most distant cows, whilst the white lead highlights repel washes, the bodies are ink, allowing the different washes in the background to remain visible. Gainsborough has used a deep bistre wash to give depth to the landscape. Whilst the drawing is in outstanding condition, the fugitive nature of 'fine Indigo' means that the blues of the sky have faded.

The motif of the drawing – herdsmen and cattle – is typical of Gainsborough's landscape drawings and raises the question of its appeal to contemporaries. His varnished sheets – some measuring over a metre in length – occupied an unusual place in Gainsborough's extensive oeuvre, being, as he stated, prepared for exhibition at the Royal Academy. Whilst the present stark composition seems unlikely to have



been prepared with exhibition in mind, its size and subject matter suggest that it might be one of those sent to London 'by Zoffani' which Gainsborough produced 'as they run off so quick.'⁴ The appeal of these works lay in part in their relationship with Dutch seventeenth-century landscapes. From early in his youth Gainsborough had been fascinated by the works of Salomon van Ruysdael, Aelbert Cuyp and Jan van Goyen; the muted palette and simple arrangement of cattle in an open landscape particularly recalls fashionable Dutch prototypes. But there is also evidence that contemporaries read something more immediate and emotional in Gainsborough's landscapes. The mood of such drawings was well described by Edward Edwards in his *Anecdotes of Painters*: 'in his latter works, bold effect, great breadth of form, with little variety of parts, united by a judicious management of light and shade, combine to produce a certain degree of solemnity. This solemnity, though striking, is not easily accounted for, when the simplicity of materials is considered, which seldom represent more than a stony bank, with a few trees, a pond, and some distant hills.'⁵ It was this imperceptible feeling of 'solemnity' which probably explained the success of a sheet such as this. There is growing evidence that Gainsborough, in common with his contemporaries, such as Alexander Cozens, was

conscious of the ability for his landscape drawings to suggest certain emotions.

This varnished drawing should be regarded as an exceptional work, not only within Gainsborough's oeuvre, but in our understanding of the development of landscape drawing in Britain during the eighteenth century. In the present sheet Gainsborough combines the simple compositional motifs learnt from Dutch seventeenth-century painters with an emotional ambiguity which would become central to the art of Romanticism.

NOTES

1. Ed. John Hayes, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 2001, p.110.
2. Ed. John Hayes, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 2001, pp.110–111.
3. Jonathan Derow, 'Gainsborough's Varnished Watercolour Technique', *Master Drawings*, vol.26, no.3, 1988, pp.259–71.
4. Gainsborough showed two large varnished landscapes at the Academy in 1772, traditionally identified as the 'Cartoon' now at Buscot Park and the large drawing at Yale; but the same year he also showed: 'Eight landscapes, drawings, in imitation of oil painting.' For the mention of Johan Zoffany couriering drawings from Bath to London see Ed. John Hayes, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 2001, p.94.
5. Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painting*, London, 1808, p.139.

RETURNING FROM MARKET

Brush and grey and brown ink, black crayon
7⅝ × 9⅝ inches · 195 × 246 mm
c.1780

COLLECTIONS

Sir Jeremiah Colman (1859–1942);
Walker Galleries, 1935;
Percy Moore Turner (1877–1950);
P & D Colnaghi;
David Eccles, 1st Viscount Eccles (1904–1999),
acquired from the above;
Thomas Agnew & Sons, 1977;
Francis Atherton Bean III, Minneapolis (1910–
1998), acquired from the above;
Bean sale, Sotheby's, London, 31 March 1999,
lot 78;
Private collection, Switzerland
Koller, Zurich, 1 April 2022, lot 3469;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

John Hayes, *The drawings of Thomas Gainsborough*, London, 1970, vol.1,
p. 18, 52, 225, no.502 and vol.2, pl.156;
The Connoisseur, 'The Arts of Europe', vol.194,
no.779, January 1977, p.88;
John Hayes and Lindsay Stainton, *Gainsborough Drawings*, exh. cat. Washington (National
Gallery of Art), 1983, no.61, p.140;
Susan Sloman, *Gainsborough's Landscapes: Themes and Variations*, exh. cat., Bath
(Holburne Museum), 2012, pp.57–59, fig.15

EXHIBITED

London, Walker Galleries, *31st Annual Exhibition of Early English Water-colours*, June to Autumn
1935, no.26;
Aldeburgh Festival, *Drawings by Thomas Gainsborough*, June 1949, no.23;
Nottingham University Art Gallery, *Landscapes by Thomas Gainsborough*, 1962, no.43;
London, P & D Colnaghi, *English Drawings and Watercolours in Memory of the Late D.C.T. Baskett*, 1963, no.30;
London, P & D Colnaghi, *English Drawings and Watercolours*, September–October 1970;
Thos Agnew & Sons Ltd, *104th Annual Exhibition*

of Watercolours and Drawings, 1977 (7) repr.;
London, Tate Gallery, *Gainsborough 1980–81*,
no.30;
Paris, Grand Palais, *Gainsborough*, 1981, cat.
no.101;
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Arts, Fort
Worth, Kimbell Art Museum and New Haven,
Yale Center for British Art, *Gainsborough drawings*, 1983, no. 61;
Minneapolis, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts,
Poetic Horizons: The Landscape Tradition in Britain, 1750–1850, October 1996–January 1997

Thomas Gainsborough's late drawings are some of the most evocative and ambiguous artistic statements of the eighteenth century. Often appearing deceptively simple, combining a limited group of motifs in a narrow range of techniques, they are frequently works of tremendous power with a profound emotional quality. In this characteristic example Gainsborough plays with one of his favourite subjects: rural figures returning from market. The three riders, accompanied by a packhorse, two donkeys and dog, are shown at the close of day, silhouetted against the failing light. It was a motif that Gainsborough explored in a series of grand exhibition landscapes in the 1770s including *Travellers Returning from Market* (Kenwood House) and the silvery masterpiece *Going to Market, Early Morning* (private collection). This unusually bold and beautiful sheet has a particularly distinguished twentieth-century provenance and an extensive exhibition and publication history, it is consequently seen as one of the quintessential late Gainsborough drawings.

Writing in his *Anecdotes of Painters* published in 1808, Edward Edwards made an important early public assessment of Gainsborough's late landscape drawings:

in his latter works, bold effect, great breadth of form, with little variety of parts, united by a judicious management of light and shade, combine to produce a certain degree of solemnity. This solemnity, though striking, is not easily accounted for, when the simplicity of materials is considered, which seldom represent more than a stony bank, with a few trees, a pond, and some distant hills.¹

This drawing perfectly encapsulates these qualities: Gainsborough has used black ink, wash and touches of black chalk on wove paper to create a strikingly simple composition; the distant hills rendered with little more than a faint wash line. Despite this apparent simplicity, the drawing nevertheless has a profound emotional appeal. Edwards characterised Gainsborough's late landscapes as 'free sketches' pointing to the fact that he developed a visual shorthand, particularly in his handling of trees, figures and animals; the latter often appearing in an almost abstract reduction of shapes and lines. Looking at the dark silhouette of the unmounted packhorse at the centre



Thomas Gainsborough
Going to Market, early morning
Oil on canvas · 48 × 58 inches · 1218 × 1472 mm · 1773
Private collection, courtesy of Sotheby's





of the composition, its slow gait is masterfully rendered with a few strokes of inky black wash.

But it is Edwards's identification that Gainsborough's landscape drawings evoked feeling – 'a certain degree of solemnity' – which is so revealing. From the mid-1770s Gainsborough produced a series of powerful, grand landscapes dealing with the subject of the rural poor going to, and returning from, market. Dating to the following decade our drawing shows Gainsborough revisiting this theme. More specifically our drawing shows Gainsborough returning to the composition of *Going to Market, Early Morning*, which he had sold to Henry Hoare of Stourhead in 1773. But rather than showing the beginning of the day, in this drawing the figures and their weary, downcast animals with empty paniers are clearly returning at the end of a long day. It is this sense of weariness that gives a solemn aspect to Gainsborough's drawing.

But the precise nature of the figures, where they have been or what they have been doing is unclear. For Gainsborough this kind of ambiguity was a deliberate visual strategy. To the eighteenth-century viewer landscapes peopled with riders on a track would instantly recall subjects familiar from countless old master paintings; the present work could, for example, be compared to a *Flight into Egypt*. In the 1760s his friend William Jackson suggested Gainsborough paint a *Flight into Egypt*, Gainsborough responded in characteristic fashion: 'do you consider ... what a deal of work history Pictures require to what little dirty subjects of Coal horses & Jack asses and such figures as I fill up with.'² Of course, these rhetorical protestations preface one of Gainsborough's most significant observations about the purpose of his landscape art: 'to create a little business for the Eye to be drawn from the Trees in order to

return to them with more glee.' The idea of 'a little business for the Eye' and the sense that meditation on his landscape compositions might bring 'glee' points to how Gainsborough, and contemporaries, appreciated his late drawings. The pleasure came from contemplating nature and innocent rural life uncorrupted by urban manners and morals. By the time he made this drawing, sensibility, or the 'cult of feeling', was at its height in Britain. Sensibility exalted feelings over the intellect as the true expressions of a person's innate morality, and there is no doubt Gainsborough saw himself as a painter of Sensibility once arguing that he always sought 'a Variety of lively touches and surprising Effects to make the Heart dance.'³

Michael Rosenthal has demonstrated that Gainsborough's rural figures were based on close observation and that Gainsborough was conscious of the stratification of British rural communities. Susan Sloman has given important context to Gainsborough's mention of 'Coal horses & Jack asses' in his letter to Jackson, pointing out how accurately he observed the various labourers he would have seen in and around Bath. By the 1760s many commentators noted the colliers close to Bath and the prevalence of miners in the city itself.⁴ The two mounted figures, with their distinctive wide brimmed hats may well be identifiable as colliers.

Edwards called these late drawings by Gainsborough his 'moppings' – implying that they were the result of felicitous accidents – and later scholars have seen a parallel with the 'blot' method of Alexander Cozens. But this characterisation belies the careful structure of this drawing. Gainsborough has worked across the whole sheet laying in areas of fluid, ink wash, in areas, such as the bank on the left, he removes the saturated wash to give a mottled effect. The trees on the right are carefully built up with layers of ink wash



Thomas Gainsborough
Open Landscape with Horsemen and Covered Cart
Gray and black wash, with traces of black and white chalk · 10¼ × 14 inches · 273 × 356 mm · 1780s
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

of varying intensity, first a thinned, grey wash is used to suggest the foliage and then a more saturated wash is used to give architecture and definition. The sophistication of his method is demonstrated by the fact that Gainsborough articulates the second horse in reserve, defining the outline against the other mounts, whilst leaving the lightly washed paper to serve as a silhouette of the animal. These qualities have all contributed to this drawing being widely exhibited and published in the twentieth century.

NOTES

1. Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painting*, London, 1808, p.139.
2. Ed. John Hayes, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 2001, pp.39-40.
3. Thomas Gainsborough to William Hoare, 1773, ed. John Hayes, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 2001, p.112-113.
4. Susan Sloman, 'The Holloway Gainsborough: its subject re-examined', *Gainsborough's House Review*, 1997/1998, pp.47-55.

FRANCESCO ZUCCARELLI 1702–1788

AN ARCADIAN LANDSCAPE

Oil on canvas
30⁷/₈ × 40¹/₂ inches · 785mm × 1030 mm
Signed: 'FZ' on the urn in the lower right

COLLECTIONS

Sir Thomas Beauchamp-Proctor, 2nd baronet (1756–1827);
Sir Christopher Proctor-Beauchamp, 9th baronet, by inheritance;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd. 2022

LITERATURE

John Preston Neale, *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, London, 1823, vol.VI, unpaginated, 'Large Landscape - Zuccarelli' listed in the Music Room at Langley Park;
John Chambers, *A General History of the County of Norfolk*, London, 1829, vol.II, p.847, listed in the Music Room at Langley Park

Francesco Zuccarelli occupies a key position in the development of British landscape painting in the eighteenth century. Working in Venice from about 1732 Zuccarelli's landscapes were enormously popular, particularly amongst British collectors. He was extensively patronised by the British Consul, Joseph Smith, and was sought out by numerous British artists who visited Venice on their Grand Tours, something which must have contributed to Zuccarelli's decision to move permanently to London in 1752. In Britain Zuccarelli found considerable success, his lyrical arcadian landscapes became a staple of major British collections from leading magnates such as Hugh Smythson, 1st Duke of Northumberland, who employed Zuccarelli to decorate the long gallery at Syon, to King George III himself, who commissioned a number of spectacular landscapes from the artist. Zuccarelli's professional success ensured that it was at the centre of artistic London, being elected a founder member of the Royal Academy in 1768. The present painting probably dates from the late 1760s and is an unusually successful composition, preserved in excellent condition it is particularly well documented, having been part of a major group of contemporary British landscapes formed in the late eighteenth century by the Beauchamp-Proctor family of Langley Park, Norfolk.

Zuccarelli was born in Pitigliano, a small town on the border between Tuscany and Lazio. Trained initially by the landscape painter Paolo Anesi in Florence, Zuccarelli made a series of etchings for Francesco Niccolò Gabburri, for which he studied the frescoes of Andrea Del Sarto. He also spent



time in Rome studying figure painting under Giovanni Maria Morandi and Pietro Nelli. After settling in Venice, Zuccarelli found success producing portraits, more ambitious works, such as the altarpiece of San Gerolamo Emiliani of 1747, now in the Pinacoteca Repposi in Chiari, but principally landscapes. It was as a landscape painter that he came to the attention of Joseph Smith, the powerful resident British Consul. Smith was a major figure in the cultural life of Venice, forming at Palazzo Balbi, his residence on the Grand Canal, an exceptional group of paintings, drawings and prints by contemporary Venetian artists. In 1746 Smith commissioned a series of overdoor capricci of English neo-Palladian buildings from the architectural painter Antonio Visentini, he commissioned Zuccarelli to complete the landscape and figural elements. In total Zuccarelli completed 27 paintings for Smith, including the eight paintings made in collaboration with Visentini.

As a consequence of his sustained patronage of contemporary Venetian painters, Smith was a key figure for British travellers, both Grand Tourists and artists. The painter Richard Wilson arrived in Venice in 1751 noting in a letter home that 'Mr Smith our Consul here is exceedingly kind to me', it was probably through Smith that he met Zuccarelli. Wilson reported that he was 'a famous Painter of this place made me an Offer of his painting me a picture for a portrait of himself w^{ch} I am doing with great pleasure.'¹ Zuccarelli, in turn, encouraged Wilson to pursue a career as a landscape painter. Zuccarelli's influence is immediately discernible in Wilson's palette, compositions and his



Richard Wilson *The White Monk*
Oil on canvas · 36 × 51¼ inches · 914 × 1302 mm · c.1760–65
Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston



Thomas Gainsborough *A seapiece, a calm*
Oil on canvas · 61½ × 75 inches · 1562 × 1905 mm · c.1783
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1948

interest in capturing light effects. Joshua Reynolds arrived in Venice in Spring 1752, with a note of introduction to Zuccarelli from Wilson, recording their conversation about the technique of old master painters: 'Zuccarellis says Paulo [Veronese] and Tintoret painted on a Gess[o] ground. He does not think Titian did.' Encouraged by these conversations, Zuccarelli left Venice for London later the same year.

In London Zuccarelli achieved considerable success. He developed a highly commercial mode of landscape painting which combined motifs of rural figures with a light filled Italianate topography. Often generically arcadian, rather than representing a specific narrative or place, Zuccarelli's works appealed to British collectors who prized the classical landscapes of Claude almost above all else. As a result, Zuccarelli's paintings could be found as the only 'modern' works hanging amidst collections of notable old masters, for example in the Green State Bedroom at Holkham Hall or hanging in Robert Adam designed frames in the Dinging Room of Kedleston Hall. Zuccarelli's relationship with Adam meant that his landscapes were regularly incorporated into his most prestigious interiors, for example as lunettes in the gallery at Syon House.

The present painting is characteristic of Zuccarelli's output showing a group of rustic figures on a roadside, the light-filled landscape recedes to distant hills, framed with trees on the right-hand side. Compositionally and atmospherically a painting such as this could readily hang amidst a group of old master paintings. It was first recorded at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the collection of Sir

Thomas Beauchamp-Proctor, 2nd baronet of Langley Park, Norfolk. Beauchamp-Proctor had inherited a significant group of Grand Tour paintings from his great uncle, George Proctor who had acquired several major works by Canaletto in Venice including a grand pair of views of around 1730 *The Grand Canal from Campo di San Vio* (Memphis Brooks Museum of Art) and *View of the Molo* (El Paso Museum of Art). Beauchamp-Proctor seems, in turn, to have collected major works by contemporary British artists. He acquired an important Italian period landscape by Richard Wilson, *The White Monk* (Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation), a work which showed in its painterliness, construction of trees and general disposition of figures and landscape composition direct evidence of Zuccarelli's influence.² The Zuccarelli itself is listed hanging in the Music Room at Langley Park paired with a landscape by Gainsborough. This was *A Seapiece, a calm*, the large landscape now in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

It seems likely that the Wilson, Zuccarelli and Gainsborough were all acquired by Sir Thomas and Lady Beauchamp-Proctor in the 1790s. There is evidence that the couple were actively building their collection at this date. In 1796 they are recorded acquiring Nicolas Poussin's *Adoration of the Shepherds* (National Gallery, London) formerly in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds through the painter and dealer Henry Walton.³ By the 1790s Wilson, Zuccarelli and Gainsborough had all died and their reputations, along with those of other first generation Royal Academicians, were going through a major

reassessment; prices for their works were rising along with their critical fortunes. In purchasing significant landscapes by the three founding landscape painters of the Royal Academy the Beauchamp-Proctors were making a considered statement about the British School and its ambition.

NOTES

1. William Constable, *Richard Wilson*, London, 1953, p.22.
2. Martin Postle, 'Meditations on The White Monk, Richard Wilson and Art of 'Good Breeding'', in ed. James Clifton and Melina Kervandjian, *A Golden Age of European Art: Celebrating Fifty Years of the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation*, New Haven and London, 2016, pp.101–114.
3. Eds. Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, New Haven and London, 1978, p.507.

JONATHAN RICHARDSON 1667-1745

A SELF-PORTRAIT WITH HIS SON AND JOHN MILTON

Oil on canvas
25 × 29¼ inches · 635 × 749 mm
Painted c.1734

COLLECTIONS

Edward Davies Davenport (1778-1847),
Capesthorne Hall by 1842;
Lt. Colonel Walter Bromley-Davenport MP
(1903-1989), by inheritance at Capesthorne
Hall;
Bromley-Davenport sale, Christie's,
British Pictures 1500-1850, 16 June, 2005,
lot 210 (£26,400);
W. Eugene Johnston III, Greensboro,
North Carolina;
Leland Little Auctions, 11 June 2022, lot 232;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

John Kerslake, 'The Richardsons and Cult of
Milton', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.99, no.646
(January 1957), pp.23-25, pl.27;
John Rupert Martin, "The Milton Portrait: Some
Addenda," *The Princeton University Library
Chronicle*, vol.24, no.3 (Spring 1963), p.170,
fig. 3;
John Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits*, London,
1977, vol.1, p.231;
David Piper, *The Image of the Poet: British Poets
and Their Portraits*, 1982, fig.70;
Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson, Art
Theorist of the English Enlightenment*, New
Haven and London, 2000, p.116, fig. 55

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, *Winter Exhibition:
British Portraits, 1556-1957*, no.87;
Manchester, Manchester City Art Gallery,
*Exhibition of Works of Art from Private
Collections in the North West and North Wales*,
September 21 - October 30, 1960, no.116

This remarkable portrait celebrates Jonathan Richardson's close relationship with Jonathan, his son, but above all his lifelong veneration of John Milton and his poetry. Richardson shows himself, his son, by this date a celebrated author, in the presence of John Milton who is crowned with laurel leaves and illuminated by a ray of heavenly light. This painting belongs to the most fascinating moment in Richardson's career, after his retirement, when he focused more on writing and undertook a concerted campaign of self-portraiture. The painting commemorates the publication in 1734 of *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost*; authored by Richardson father and son, the text takes the form of a biography of Milton and general discussion of *Paradise Lost*, followed by over 500 pages of remarks on selected lines from the poem. As such, this portrait offers a remarkable statement about Richardson's self-fashioning as a writer, painter, father and major intellectual figure in Augustan Britain.

Jonathan Richardson rose from modest beginnings – he was the son of a London silk weaver – to become one of the most successful portrait painters of his generation. His sitters included many luminaries of the late Stuart and early Georgian period and he befriended some of the most remarkable writers of his generation, particularly Alexander Pope. According to his son, Richardson had twice been 'powerfully invited' to be the King's painter, but had refused because of his 'aversion to what he called the slavery of court dependence.'¹ He authored the pioneering *Theory of Painting* in 1715 and the *Two Discourses* in 1719 and was a director, from its foundation,

of the Great Queen Street Academy. On Richardson's death in 1745, the chronicler of the early Georgian art world, George Vertue remarked that: 'this was the last of the Eminent old painters. that had been contemporaries in Reputation – Kneller Dahl Jarvis & Richardson for portrait painting.'²

From 1728, until his death in 1745, Richardson retired from his portraiture practice, but in its place undertook an extraordinary sequence of self-portraits. It was not until the sale of the collection of Richardson, the Younger in 1772 that the extent of his activities as a self-portraitist were revealed, prompting the writer Horace Walpole to observe that: 'after his retirement from business, the good old man seems to have amused himself with writing a short poem, and drawing his own or son's portrait every day.'³ Whilst numerous drawings survive, Richardson produced very few painted self-portraits, of which this is one of the most extraordinary.

Richardson shows himself without a wig, wrapped in a loose gown, an ink pot and paper before him, standing with his son, who is similarly shown wigless. Arranged in a landscape behind a parapet, the two Richardsons are placed next to Milton. The poet's likeness is derived from a pastel by William Faithorne which belonged to George Vertue. Richardson knew the portrait well, producing an engraved copy for the frontispiece of *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* in 1734 noting: 'tis done from a Picture which I have reason to believe he sate for not long before his Death, I have therefore given a little more Vigour to the Print.'⁴ A finely worked copy in plumbago on vellum by Richardson is included in



this catalogue. Richardson shows Milton crowned with laurels, wrapped in a purple velvet cloak and illuminated by a shaft of celestial light.

Richardson first encountered *Paradise Lost* when training in the studio of John Riley: 'happening to find the First Quarto in Mr Riley's Painting-Room was Dazzled with it, and from that Hour all the rest (*Shakespeare* excepted) Faded in my Estimation, or Vanish'd.' The result of Richardson's devotion to Milton was *Explanatory Notes*, a book he worked on closely with his son. Richardson explained the purpose of their commentary on passages from *Paradise Lost* in distinctly pictorial terms. He argued that the novelty of their approach:

*is Necessary to the Understand of an Author when he speaks to the Imagination, and would Convey the Image Himself Sees. Milton was as Great a Master in This Kind of Painting as Ever Was; but Few have Pencils to Copy his Images in their Own Minds; we have Endeavour'd to Assist Such.*⁵

The commentary relied much on the erudition of Richardson junior, who had been responsible for much of the research for the hugely successful *Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy* which had been published in 1722 and rapidly became the standard account of art on the Grand Tour. Richardson laid great stress on his reliance on his son's knowledge of Latin texts and philological derivations, this gave rise to a satirical drawing by Hogarth. But modern literary scholars have been more forgiving, suggesting that the Richardsons' commentary was 'based on a much broader and profounder



Jonathan Richardson
Portrait of the Artist's Son, Jonathan Richardson the Younger, in his Study
Oil on canvas on board · 35½ × 28 inches
904 × 715 mm · c.1734
Tate, London (photo Tate)



Jonathan Richardson *Self-Portrait*
Oil on canvas · 12¾ × 10¾ inches · 315 × 276mm
'Aug/1733'
Princeton University Art Museum

conception of Milton's poetry' than that of earlier authors.

The present portrait seems likely to have been made to celebrate publication of *Explanatory Notes*. It shows the two authors presumably with the manuscript of their work standing next to their idol. There is no obvious visual precedent, either in religious or secular painting, it is a completely singular concept, combining as it does, a self-portrait, a portrait and historical portrait to form a modern poetic allegory.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Richardson, *Morning Thoughts*, London, 1776, p.281.
2. G. Vertue, eds. L. Cust and A. Hind, 'The Notebooks of George Vertue', *The Walpole Society*, London, 1929-47, III, p.125.
3. Quoted in Susan Owens, *Jonathan Richardson: By Himself*, exh. cat. London (The Courtauld Gallery), 2015, pp.9-10.
4. Jonathan Richardson, *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise*, London, 1734, p.ii.
5. Jonathan Richardson, *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise*, London, 1734, p.clxxv.



JOHN MILTON

Plumbago on vellum
6⅞ × 3½ inches · 117 × 90 mm
Stamped with the Richardson studio stamp
(Lugt 2170) recto and dated 5 Dec 1734 in
Richardson's hand on verso

COLLECTIONS

Jonathan Richardson, Junior (1694-1771)
(L. 2170);
William Esdaile (1758-1837), by 1803, (L. 2617);
Dr. George C. Williamson (1858-1942),
(L. 2578);
J. King, Wantage;
Christie's, 5 June 2007, lot 1;
Sotheby's, 23 September 2021, lot 107;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

F. Russell, *The Loyd Collection of Paintings,
Drawings and Sculptures*, 1991, no.117B, p.44,
pl. 57



Jonathan Richardson *Portrait of John Milton*
Etching · 8⅞ × 16 inches · 206 × 405 mm · 1734
© The Trustees of the British Museum

This delicately worked graphite drawing of the poet John Milton was made by Jonathan Richardson senior whilst he was writing his *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost*. Published in 1734, the book contained as a frontispiece this portrait of Milton crowned with laurels and signed by Richardson 'from an Excel^t Orig (Crayons) in his Collection.' It seems likely Richardson owned a version of a pastel by William Faithorne from which he made this study. Richardson went to some lengths to find an accurate portrait of the poet for his book, he made a more heavily worked copy of the Faithorne pastel, also graphite on vellum, which is now in the British Museum, along with studies of the terracotta bust by Edward Pierce II of Milton. Richardson explains his choice of the current version noting: 'tis done from a Picture which I have reason to believe he sate for not long before his Death, I have therefore given a little more Vigour to the Print.'¹

This finely worked study is part of a series of drawings in graphite on vellum Richardson made of famous men, particularly notable figures from the seventeenth century. It was clearly prized by both father and son and is annotated with Jonathan Richardson junior's collector's stamp. The drawing was acquired at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the banker and collector William Esdaile and latterly belonged to the pioneering art historian Dr George Williamson who authored a series of monographs on eighteenth-century British artists. Williamson curated an exhibition on the *Milton Tercentenary* at Cambridge University Library in 1908.

NOTE

1. Jonathan Richardson, *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise*, London, 1734, p.ii.



actual size

JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY 1734–1797

A HERMIT

Oil on canvas
30 × 25 inches · 762 × 635 mm
1769

COLLECTIONS

Presumably a gift to William Tate (1747–1806);
Sotheby's, 17 February 1999, lot 250 (as by Tate);
Christie's, 29 October 2008, lot 139 (as by Tate);
Private collection, London to 2021

LITERATURE

Matthew Craske, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Darkness*, New Haven and London, 2020, pp.141–142, illustrated (fig.84)

To be included in Martin Postle's forthcoming
Joseph Wright of Derby catalogue raisonné.

This painting by Joseph Wright of Derby is an exciting recent discovery, first published by Matthew Craske in his 2020 book *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Darkness*, it has been identified as one of a series of depictions of old men Wright made whilst he was working on his 1769 painting *The Hermit* now in the Derby Museum and Art Gallery.¹ This exceptional canvas was therefore painted in Liverpool whilst Wright was working on his great sequence of candlelight compositions. It was whilst based in Liverpool that Wright conceived and painted his two versions of *An Academy by Lamplight* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven and Private Collection) and *The Blacksmith's Shop* (Yale Center for British Art and Derby Museums and Art Gallery), as well as the pair of paintings depicting *Two Boys Inflating a Bladder* (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, formerly with Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.) and *Two Girls Decorating a Cat* (Kenwood House, London). Wright was fascinated by studying old men, he produced numerous paintings and drawings of elderly models as well as conceiving a group of significant subject-pictures which feature old men as the central character. These paintings which include *The Old Man and Death* (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum, Hartford), *The Captive from Sterne* (Vancouver Art Gallery) and *The Hermit* (Derby Museum and Art Gallery) all centre on depicting old men contemplating their own mortality and point to Wright's place as one of the greatest philosopher-painters of the eighteenth century.

Joseph Wright of Derby was born into a professional family in Derby, he was trained under Thomas Hudson as a portraitist in



Joseph Wright of Derby *Study of a man seated*
Pen and sepia wash · 27 × 19 inches · 686 × 483 mm · 1774
Derby Museum & Art Gallery



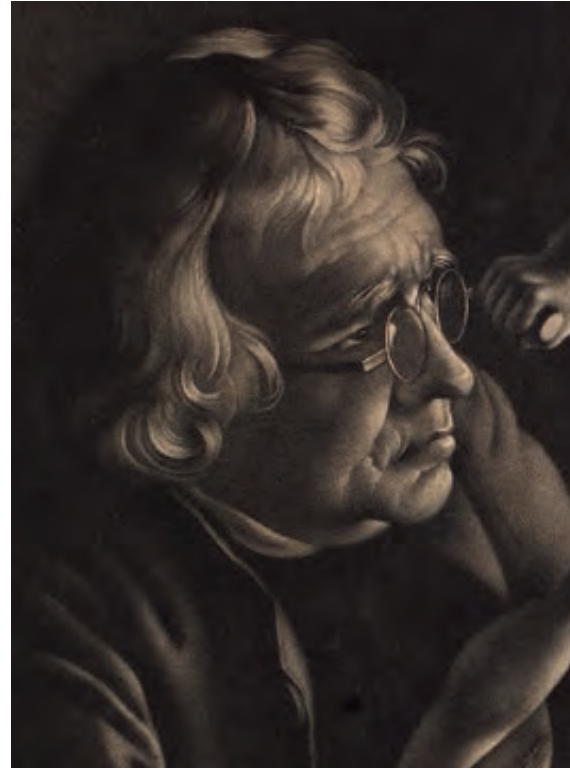


London. In 1753 Wright returned to Derby, in common with other painters of the period, preferring to establish a reputation as a portrait painter in his hometown before attempting to compete in London. Wright was evidently ambitious, engaging with many of the mechanisms for the promotion of art in the middle of the eighteenth century; he sent paintings to the new exhibiting societies, worked with engravers to try and promote his paintings and in 1768 moved to Liverpool in pursuit of new clientele.

Wright's great sequence of candlelight paintings are notable for their inclusion of identifiable models. The first of these, *Three Persons Viewing the Gladiator by Candle-Light*, painted in 1765 almost certainly shows Peter Perez Burdett, Wright's sometime portrait sitter, model, artistic adviser and debtor, along with Wright himself and an old man traditionally identified as John Wilson, the resident of an almshouse in Derby. There

is plenty of contemporary evidence to suggest that Wright sought older models for his works.

The first entry in Wright's surviving *Account Book* preserved in the National Portrait Gallery, London records: 'John Fletcher of Osmaston an old balded headed Man.' Fletcher, from the small village of Osmaston, 12 miles from Derby, presumably agreed to sit to Wright. Later in the 1770s Wright made a series of powerful oil studies of a striking, bearded man with long white hair and aquiline profile. A drawing of the same model now in the Morgan Library and Museum, New York identifies the sitter as 'John Staveley who came from Hertfordshire with Mr French and sat to Mr Wright in the character of the old man and his ass in the *Sentimental Journey*.' Staveley appears in Wright's account book as the sitter in a number of completed works and scholars have long



William Pether, after Joseph Wright of Derby *Three Persons viewing the Gladiator by Candlelight* and detail of Peter Perez Burdett.

Mezzotint · plate 17 1/8 × 22 1/8 inches · 455 × 561 mm
Published 1769 · Earliest proof state: Clayton P 3 1/iii
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd



Joseph Wright of Derby
The Hermit
Oil on canvas · 50 1/2 × 40 1/2 inches · 1282 × 1029 mm · 1769
Derby Museum and Art Gallery

identified him as the model in some of Wright's most ambitious historical works.

It is probable that John Fletcher and Staveley were labourers. The practice of employing working men as models was extremely fashionable in London around 1769. Joshua Reynolds encountered a man: 'exerting himself in the laborious employment of thumping down stones in the street; and observing not only the grand and majestic traits of his countenance, but the dignity of his muscular figure, took him out of a situation to which his strength was by no means equal, clothed, fed, and had him, first as a model in his own painting room, then introduced him as a subject for the students of the Royal Academy.'² This was the model George White who formed the basis for a series of Reynolds's most esteemed historical compositions, including *Ugolino and his Children* (Knole, Kent). Reynolds's paintings, were frequently, in effect, portraits, showing White in various poses, their status as subject pictures suggested by his costume and Reynolds's titles: *Resignation*, *Pope Pavaris*, *The Captive*. Through Reynolds White modelled for Benjamin West, Johan Zoffany and the sculptor John Bacon who all produced similarly historicised portraits.

The ubiquity of White as a model in London is partly explained by the apparent difficulty of finding suitable models. The Scottish painter David Allen wrote to Gavin Hamilton 'we rarely see in this country a countenance like that of a Franciscan, or an Italian beggar, so full of character and expression, and so useful to the study of History-Painting.' It appears that Wright, operating outside London, fared better. Just as Reynolds did, Wright posed his models as historical and literary figures as well as

generic types. Staveley was posed as *The Captive* from Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* and another model appears in a painting with the somewhat ambiguous title: *The Hermit*. Showing an elderly man in a lamplit cave, Wright's first nocturnal landscape and one of the most ambitious paintings he made in Liverpool in 1769. Matthew Craske has recently suggested that the present painting was made by Wright whilst he was working on *The Hermit*. Writing in his recent book, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Darkness*, Craske discusses a painting by Wright of an old man from the Arkwright collection and then addresses our painting:

*Another study of this sort has come to light. A similar model, if not the same one, is shown stooping forward, seemingly lost in reflection. He is set against a crumbling brick wall, painted in the technique of representing ruin that Wright first employed in his great conversation portrait of Burdett and his wife, Hannah (1765) ... It is, thus likely to be another study of a dishevelled, stooped, old man that was made in preparation for *The Hermit*.³*

Shown leaning on a rough wooden staff, dressed in frayed sackcloth, Wright poses his vigorous old model in a simple interior. The 'crumbling brick wall', as Craske observes, was a motif Wright had first explored in his double portrait of *Peter Perez Burdett and his Wife, Hannah*, now in the Národní Galerie, Prague; aged bricks, mortar and flaking render would go on to form a vital backdrop for a succession of Wright's most ambitious nocturnal works, from the *Farrier's Shop, Dale Abbey* of 1770 to *Old Man and Death* of 1773 and *The Captive from Sterne* of 1774. The brick backdrop does

impart a sense of constriction, possibly even incarceration. The light source is evidently moonlight glimpsed through a leaded window. The painting therefore contains all the ingredients of Wright's more famous depictions of beggars: the vigorous old man, dressed in rags, staff in hand in a mood of contemplation, set in a moonlit interior.

Craske is surely correct in suggesting a date of 1769. The lushly painted canvas is entirely consistent with Wright's technique on the eve of his departure for Italy. The luminous flesh tones, the lines of white paint used to suggest the white hair and the delight in capturing the frayed edge of the fabric all find their parallels in Wright's works of the period. Perhaps most compelling is the palette, the hot underpainting of the flesh is identical to Wright's Liverpool period portraiture. It is possible that the model in our painting appears in one other work by Wright from this period: *The Old Man and Death* of 1773. Comparing the physiognomy of the two sitters – the slightly bulging eyes, with their clear blue colouring, the pronounced, straight nose and wispy white hair hanging below the ear are all consistent – the only difference is the stubbly beard that the model wears in *The Old Man and Death*.

When our painting appeared on the market in 1999 the unlined canvas was inscribed on the reverse: 'W. Tate F.S.A'. It was suggested that the painting had been made by Joseph Wright of Derby's friend and pupil William Tate. In Liverpool Wright lodged with Richard Tate, whose brother, William became one of his best-known pupils and a lifelong friend. Wright's encouragement of Tate included encouraging him to exhibit works at the Society of

Artists in London and even campaigning for his election as a Fellow in 1773. The inscription on the reverse of our painting and the fact that Tate exhibited a work entitled 'An old man' at the Society of Artists in 1771 has always prompted the attribution to Tate. But, as Craske recently pointed out, the inscription: 'is probably an indication of ownership, rather than authorship. A very fine work of art, this is superior to anything that survives by Tate and cannot be something made by the latter after a couple of years of instruction.'⁴ It is, therefore, a very remarkable rediscovery of a subject-painting painted by Joseph Wright of Derby at the height of his powers.

We are very grateful to Dr Martin Postle for confirming the attribution of this painting on first-hand inspection.

NOTES

1. Matthew Craske, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Darkness*, New Haven and London, 2020, pp.141–2.
2. For George White see Martin Postle, 'Patriarchs, prophets, and paviours: Reynolds's images of old age', *The Burlington Magazine*, 1988, vol. cxxx, pp.736–7 and Martin Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: the subject pictures*, Cambridge, 1995, pp.121–60.
3. Matthew Craske, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Darkness*, New Haven and London, 2020, pp.141.
4. Matthew Craske, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Darkness*, New Haven and London, 2020, p.141.

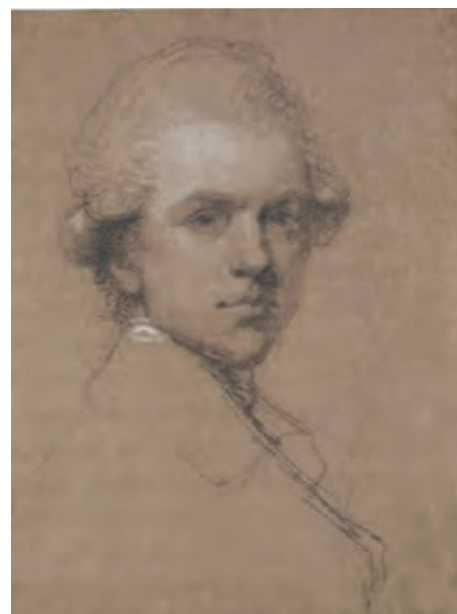


OZIAS HUMPHRY 1742–1810

PORTRAIT STUDIES

Black and red chalks with watercolour wash on laid paper
6⅞ × 7⅞ inches · 154 × 193 mm
Drawn in 1786

This beautifully assured portrait study of three figures was drawn by Ozias Humphry during his trip to India made between 1785 and 1787. Almost certainly showing three servants, Humphry's drawing is an unusually sensitive record by an eighteenth-century European artist of non-elite Indians. Humphry, like Johan Zoffany who was in India at the same moment, filled several sketchbooks with informal, rapidly made impressions of the country he encountered. These studies include casual sketches of barefoot Indian women, squatting men as well as portraits of individual attendants



Ozias Humphry *Self-portrait*
Black and white chalk on buff paper · 18¼ × 14 inches
476 × 356 mm
© The Trustees of the British Museum

and landscapes of the houses of westerners he met on his travels. Ultimately Humphry had unfeasible expectations of his time in the country, expectations which resulted in an acrimonious lawsuit and his return to Britain. Curiously, unlike his contemporaries Thomas and William Daniell or Zoffany, Humphry never made use of the remarkable archive of studies he had made in India. The majority of Humphry's drawings remain in sketchbooks now in the British Library, this is an immensely rare, loose sheet.

Humphry had a conventional trajectory, he was trained by the miniaturist Samuel Collins in Bath, before establishing a flourishing practice in London from his studio at 21 King Street, Covent Garden. Humphry visited Italy for four years, travelling with George Romney to Rome in 1773. Returning to London, Humphry, in common with other painters of the period, responded to the economic downturn in Britain by looking to India for potentially lucrative commissions. Humphry approached the East India Company for permission to travel to India in July 1784. Humphry compiled a list of materials he was proposing to take with him which included 'an easel that packs', 'varnish nut oil', 'drying oil' and frames in pieces in addition to 'ivories', 'glasses' for miniatures and their cases. By the time Humphry had embarked on board the *Francis* for Calcutta he was able to write of his expectation of making 'a competence, if not affluent provision' for his old age.¹

Once established in Calcutta, Humphry found the city less remunerative than he had hoped. Following rumours that Johan Zoffany was earning a fortune working in Lucknow, Humphry petitioned the Acting Governor-General, Sir John Macpherson,

for letters of introduction to the Nawab wazir of Oudh, Asaf-ud-Daula. Macpherson duly wrote explaining Humphry's practice as a miniaturist: '[t]here is another style of painting, that of drawing perfect likeness in small pictures, which is most agreeable, because the hand of friendship can always carry them as a remembrance. The most eminent gentleman in England in this line of painting is Mr Homphry, whom I have deputed to the Presence to bring me pictures of your Excellency, of the Shah Zudda, and your own son and your Ministers. He will show your Excellency a picture of me, and it is a true ressemblance. Till I have the pleasure of a personal interview with your Excellency, make me happy by sending me your picture, and by your attention and favour to Mr Homphrey, who has drawn some of the Kings of Europe, and who has met with favour from the King of England. It is worthy of Princes to favour men who are eminent to the fine arts.'²

Humphry left Calcutta and began the long journey on the Hooghley by budgerow. Throughout the journey he was alive to the novelty of all he was seeing, recording his first ride on an elephant at Murshidabad, first sight of an alligator on the Ganges, at Sakrigali he was interested to see pilgrims returning from Allahabad with holy water. He noted the 'picturesque and pleasing effect of them reposing in shadow under trees near the river.'³ All the time Humphry was drawing what he saw, writing home to Mary Boydell, daughter of his sponsor John Boydell: 'it was my desire in this Indian expedition not more to make money than to collect materials, by drawing and painting the dresses and manners of the people, which I shall endeavour to convert both to





profit and employment after my return to England.⁴

Humphry arrived in Lucknow in February 1786 and was immediately introduced to the cosmopolitan European community as well as the Nawab and his court. Humphry completed his portrait miniatures of Asaf-ud-Daula, his son and the other dignitaries suggested in the letter from Macpherson along with a number of European sitters. His sketchbooks show that he stayed with a number of the prominent European personalities, including John Wombwell, whose servants he drew. It seems likely that the present drawing dates either from his journey upcountry or time in Lucknow. The finely worked sheet is handled in Humphry's characteristic manner, the hands and face of the central figure are described with a mass of hatched lines, consistent with Humphry's method as a miniaturist. Unlike the majority of studies in the British Library sketchbooks, this sheet offers a penetrating portrait of

the elderly retainer with his flowing white beard and red turban. The status of the man is suggested by the pose, Humphry carefully delineates the man's powerful hands grasping his stick or staff, confirming him as a working figure rather than one of the ruling elite. Humphry has added profile studies of both a middle-aged Indian and a young man, creating a composition that recalls traditional images of the three ages of man.

Whilst at Lucknow Humphry was clearly actively gathering studies of interesting Indian figures, intent on producing some form of publication on his return to Britain. The French army officer Claude Martin wrote to Humphry on his return to Britain: *I am very glad to find you carried with you many memorandum of this country, it will enable you to give the world many fine thing[s] from your elegant pencil. Remember I am to be in the subscription if you make any for your portefolio of 'Les loisis de Chevalier Humphry, des beauies des Indes orientales ou des Vièrges de l'East'.*

To underscore the point, Martin sketched a voluptuous dancing girl. In the end Humphry never used the extensive material he assembled in India. His dyspeptic character resulted in a lengthy legal wrangle over payment from Macpherson and it seems to have soured his relationship with the country and its people. The present sheet, a rare example on the market, demonstrates both how attentive and how sensitive Humphry was to the new worlds he encountered in India.

NOTES

1. Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825*, Oxford, 1979, p.189.
2. Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825*, Oxford, 1979, p.191.
3. Mildred Archer, *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825*, Oxford, 1979, p.191.
4. London, Royal Academy Library, Humphry MSS, vol.3, f.50.



Johan Zoffany *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*
Oil on paper laid on canvas · 24¼ × 27½ inches · 540 × 698 mm · 1791
Private collection, USA, formerly with Lowell Libson Ltd



Johan Zoffany *Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match*
Detail showing, from left to right, John Wombwell, Ozias Humphrey and Zoffany's self-portrait

A FRIEZE DESIGNED FOR EDWARD KNIGHT



Pen, ink and wash on two pieces of conjoined paper
 9¼ × 30¼ inches · 235 × 767 mm
 Drawn in 1791

INSCRIBED

On the verso: 'the horses for the chariot of the sun, the front of an Sarcophagus lately purchased by the Pope/ figures about 22 inches high of a grand character of sculpture best in correct, the heads of Apollo, Diana, Autumn, & Summer as well as some of the most projecting limbs being broken are restored by me in the drawing'

COLLECTIONS

Commissioned by Edward Knight (1734-1812); John Knight (1760-1850), nephew of the above; Frederick Winn Knight (1812-1897); son of the above;
 Major Eric Ayshford Knight (1863-1944), nephew of the above, at Wolverley House; Presumably sold, Wolverley House sale (G. H. Banks, Kidderminster, 25-28 April 1945); Private collection to 2022

LITERATURE

Eds. Hugh Brigstocke, Eckart Marchand and A. E. Wright, 'John Flaxman and William Young Ottley in Italy', *The Walpole Society*, vol.LXXII, 2010, pp.154-155

This exceptional drawing is a significant rediscovery, made by John Flaxman whilst in Rome in 1791 it is one of a group of ten large studies of antique bas-reliefs commissioned by his most significant early patron, Edward Knight.¹ Whilst the commission is carefully listed by Flaxman in one of his Italian sketchbooks (now in the Yale Center for British Art), the drawings it describes are largely missing, making the reappearance of this sheet particularly significant. Preserved in spectacular condition, this drawing

shows Flaxman's masterful skill as a designer; although ostensibly a record of an existing antiquity, the drawing is far from being an archaeological study, it is a creative interpretation of the sculpture executed in his characteristic, fluent neo-classical style.

Flaxman was the son of a professional sculptor, and he received his earliest education in his father's Covent Garden shop and studio. Flaxman's early prodigious talents as a draughtsman attracted the attention of two of his father's professional contacts,

George Romney and Josiah Wedgwood, both of whom became important supporters. But it was Edward Knight who became Flaxman's earliest and most consistent patron. As J.T. Smith noted that as a young man Flaxman was introduced to 'Mr Knight of Portland-place, who became his first employer as a Sculptor ... who generously supplied him with money.'² Knight was from a distinguished family of wealthy iron masters, his cousin was the connoisseur and collector Richard Payne



Knight and brother-in-law of the amateur painter, Copleston Ware Bampfylde. Throughout the 1780s Knight commissioned Flaxman to complete a series of sculptures for both Wolverley House, his estate in Worcestershire and his house in Portland Place.

Flaxman set out for the Continent with a series of commissions, including from Josiah Wedgwood, who relied on Flaxman to supply designs for his Etruria works. One of Flaxman's tasks was to supervise the work of John Devaere, who was being sponsored by Wedgwood to work as a modeller in Rome. But all Flaxman's earliest works in Italy were commissioned by Knight. An entry in Flaxman's Italian sketchbook lists 'Mr Knight's bas-reliefs' the first of which is identified as: 'Apollo & Diana with winds Seasons &c.' This ties in with Flaxman's own inscription on the verso of this drawing identifying the subject-matter of the relief. A later entry in the same sketchbook dated 1791 records 'Ten drawings of bas reliefs' and a price of £28 - 17.¹³ The drawings were dispatched with a bust of Homer designed by Flaxman and carved by John Devaere. In April 1792 Knight wrote to Flaxman: 'the bust of Homer with a Case of Drawings arrived the latter end of last year when

everybody was absent from London and I might then have given you my single approbation of your performance, but I wished rather to delay writing to you, till that approbation was likewise confirmed by the opinion of a better, and less partial judge than myself, which I have the satisfaction to inform you it has been in the most ample manner by everyone, who has an eye for anything that is not Antique.'¹⁴

Of the ten drawings commissioned by Knight, only one has previously been identified, a less elaborately worked sheet depicting *The First Visit of Bacchus to Ariadne* adapted from a Roman sarcophagus and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. This makes the reappearance of this sheet particularly noteworthy. This large pen, ink and wash drawing is a complex piece of neo-classical design. Ostensibly based on a Roman sarcophagus, identified in Flaxman's own inscription as 'lately purchased by the Pope', but largely a work of his own invention. Flaxman readily admits that the heads of the principal figures and 'some of the most projecting limbs' are 'restored by me in the drawing'

Knight's commission poses some questions about the purpose of these drawings. Flaxman's principal activity in

John Flaxman
Design for a Frieze, after a Roman Sarcophagus
Pen and black ink, brush and grey wash
9 13/16 x 25 3/8 inches · 249 x 644 mm · 1791
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1961



John Flaxman
Amphion and Zethus Delivering their Mother Antiope from the Fury of Dirce and Lycus
Pen, pencil and grey ink · 6 7/8 x 11 1/2 inches · 161 x 292 mm
Signed, inscribed, and dated lower left, in pen and grey-brown ink: Flaxman, Roma 1789
Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Dorothy Braude Edinburg to the Harry B. and Bessie K. Braude Memorial Collection

Rome was as a designer: studying antiquities and early Italian sculpture, refining his own neo-classicism and producing new compositions for his British clients. It is telling that recording the composition of bas-reliefs preoccupied Flaxman in his first years in Rome. Knight had commissioned at least two large bas-reliefs from Flaxman including a 'copy in clay of the bas relief of the Borghese vase, the figures one foot high' and a large bas relief 'the figures 4 feet high of Hercules delivering Alcestis from Orcus.'¹⁵ It therefore seems likely that the 'Ten drawings of bas-reliefs' were ordered by Knight as part of a larger commission of sculptural design from Flaxman. Knight was in the process of decorating both Wolverley House and Portland Place and had already commissioned a considerable number of sculptural elements for both interiors from Flaxman. In 1781 Flaxman had written to Josiah Wedgwood proposing the frieze he had designed for a chimneypiece for Knight would serve as an appropriate model for the showroom at Etruria.

Relief sculpture and bas-reliefs in particular dominated Flaxman's thinking in Rome. In 1789 Flaxman explained in a letter to George Romney, that the splendid British patron Frederick Hervey, 4th Earl

of Bristol and Bishop of Derry: 'called to see what I have done and ordered me to carve in marble for him, a bas relief I have modelled between eight and nine feet. And near five feet high. Representing *Amphion and Zethus Delivering their Mother Antiope from the Fury of Dirce and Lycus*.'¹⁶ The preparatory drawing for this relief, now at the Art Institute of Chicago, shows how Flaxman developed figures observed from antique sarcophagi into dynamic neo-classical designs. Flaxman's disciplined assimilation of forms from Roman relief sculpture ultimately fuelled his great graphic projects, the illustrated publications of Homer, Aeschylus and Dante. The present drawing is filled with precisely the kind of boldly linear figures which populated Flaxman's illustrated books. The four muscular male figures holding horses, with winged helmets are emblematic of the four winds and appear again in Flaxman's illustration of *The Funeral Pyre of Patroclus*, one of the designs for the Iliad engraved by Tommaso Piroli. Preserved in outstanding condition and on an impressive scale, this is the most significant Roman drawing by Flaxman to appear on the market in a generation.

NOTES

1. For Knight's patronage of Flaxman see Ella Hendriks, 'The first patron of John Flaxman', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.126, no.979 (Oct 1984), pp.618-625.
2. John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and His Times*, London, 1829, vol.II, p.443.
3. Eds. Hugh Brigstocke, Eckart Marchand and A. E. Wright, 'John Flaxman and William Young Ottley in Italy', *The Walpole Society*, vol.LXXII, 2010, p154.
4. Ella Hendriks, 'The first patron of John Flaxman', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.126, no.979 (Oct 1984), p.622.
5. Ella Hendriks, 'The first patron of John Flaxman', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol.126, no.979 (Oct 1984), p.622.
6. John Romney, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney*, London, 1830, p.208.



ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER 1748–1828

CAROLINE CAMPBELL, LADY AILESBURY

Marble
Height 20 inches · 508 mm
Carved in 1789

INSCRIBED

On the front of the socle: 'CAROLINA · / CAMPBELL · / ARGATHELLAE · / DUCIS · FILIA ·'
On the left-hand side of the socle: 'ANNA · / SEYMOUR · DAMER · / FECIT ·'
On the back of the bust: 'ANNA / ΣΕΙΜΟΡΙΣ / ΔΑΜΕΡ / ΕΠΟΙΕΙ / ΦΙΛΗ ΜΗΤΗΡ / ΑΥΤΗΣ'

COLLECTIONS

Bequeathed by the artist to her cousin Lady Louisa Johnston; Captain Frederick Campbell-Johnston (1812–1896), son of the above; By inheritance in the Campbell-Johnston family; Campbell-Johnston sale, Sotheby's, 8 December, 2006, lot 142; Private collection, New York to 2022; Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

Percy Noble, *Anne Seymour Damer: A Woman of Art and Fashion*, London, 1908, p.79; Ed. W. S. Lewis, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, New Haven and London, 1944, vol.12, p.274, 'Her mother in marble'; Richard Webb, *Mrs D The Life of Anne Damer (1748–1828)*, Studley, 2008, p.XXIV, reproduced; Ingrid Roscoe, *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain 1660–1851*, New Haven and London, 2009, p.336, no.31

EXHIBITED

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, British Galleries until 2021; London, Strawberry Hill, November 2021 – February 2022

ENGRAVED

By John Jones, 'Caroline Campbell Countess of Ailesbury, from the original bust in marble executed by her daughter the Hon^{ble} Anne Damer', stipple engraving, published by James Roberts, June 26, 1790.

The annals of statuary record few artists of the fair sex, and not one that I recollect of any celebrity. Mrs Damer's busts from the life are not inferior to the antique, and theirs we are sure, were not more like.

Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, London, 1849, vol.I, pp.xx–xxi

This striking portrait bust was carved in 1789 by Anne Seymour Damer. Depicting Damer's mother, Lady Caroline Campbell, later Countess of Ailesbury, this remarkably bold piece of sculpture demonstrates Damer's ability both as a designer of powerful neo-classicism and a formidable technician. One of only a dozen documented works in marble by Damer, this bust was first listed by Horace Walpole in his *Book of Visitors* in 1789, it was engraved the same year by John Jones and later replicated by Damer for her mother's tomb. The bust, set on a socle copiously inscribed in both Ancient Greek and Latin, was retained by Damer, and left by her to one of her cousins, Lady Louisa Johnston. Most recently it has been on long-term loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where it was installed in their new British galleries.

Damer is arguably the most considerable female sculptor of the eighteenth century. Despite a number of recent exhibitions and publications, her work remains little known and her place as not only one of the pioneering female artists of the eighteenth century, but one of the most consistently original neo-classical sculptors of the period has been largely overlooked.¹ Born into wealth and privilege, Damer's work has often been undermined by her inferred status as an

amateur. A fact compounded by the misogynistic tone of her early biographer, Allan Cunningham, who cast doubt on the authorship of Damer's marbles, suggesting she used assistants to carve her busts. However, Damer saw herself as a professional: trained to model by the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi and instructed in carving marble in the productive studio of John Bacon, Damer had a solid practical grounding. In common with male artists of the period she travelled extensively on the Continent and there is evidence that she closely studied antique sculpture, and also in common with



John Jones (after Anne Seymour Damer)
Caroline Campbell, Countess of Ailesbury
Stipple engraving · 14 × 10 inches · 354 × 253 mm
Published by James Roberts, June 26, 1790:
from the original bust in marble / executed by her daughter / the Hon^{ble} Anne Damer / 1789
© The Trustees of the British Museum

sculptors such as Joseph Nollekens, restored antiquities.² Her work was consistently praised by contemporaries. She exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy, received public commissions and worked in a range of materials: wax, terracotta, bronze and marble. Furthermore, Damer is consistently portrayed as a sculptor in contemporary portraits, including works by Richard Cosway and John Downman, both of which show her specifically in the process of working in stone, with mallet and chisel in hand.

Damer was the daughter of the Hon. Henry Seymour Conway, a distinguished army officer and Whig politician and Caroline Campbell, daughter of John, 4th Duke of Argyll and widow of Charles Bruce, 3rd Earl of Ailesbury. She spent her childhood at Park Place, Remenham, near Henley-on-Thames. Her father's cousin, Horace Walpole was hugely important throughout her childhood, acting as her guardian during her parents' frequent absences abroad, and at his death he bequeathed her Strawberry Hill as his executor and residuary legatee.

Damer's early trajectory was conventional enough, in 1767 she married John Damer, eldest son of Joseph Damer, 1st Earl of Dorchester. The Damers were at the heart of London society, Anne taking her place amongst a new generation of Whig hostesses, including Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and Elizabeth Lamb, Viscountess Melbourne. The three were depicted in a celebrated pastel by Daniel Gardner in the guise of the three witches from *Macbeth* (National Portrait Gallery, London). The Damers' marriage was an unhappy one, John Damer, despite a considerable income, fell into debt and after seven years of marriage the couple separated. Damer's finances worsened to such an extent that in 1776 he committed suicide in a public house in Covent Garden.

Forced to withdraw from society, it was in widowhood that Damer was able to



W. Greatbach, after Cosway
The Hon Anne Seymour Damer
 Stipple engraving · 8¾ × 5½ inches
 223 × 140 mm
 Published 1857
 Private collection

pursue her interest in sculpture. It is thanks to Horace Walpole that we learn of Damer's sculptural training with the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi. Giuseppe Ceracchi trained in Rome with Tommaso Righi, then continued his studies at the Accademia di San Luca. In 1773 he travelled to London to work with Agostino Carlini, a founding member of the Royal Academy. Ceracchi exhibited busts at the Royal Academy in



the late 1770s and modelled architectural ornaments and bas-relief panels for Robert Adam. In 1778 Ceracchi sculpted the statues of *Temperance* and *Fortitude* cast in Portland stone for Strand façade of Sir William Chambers' Somerset House, London. It was possibly through Carlini that he first met Anne Damer, Carlini had been commissioned by her father-in-law, Lord Dorchester, to produce an impressive and moving monument to himself and his wife at Milton Abbey. Walpole tells us that Ceracchi taught Damer to model, certainly Ceracchi was a virtuosic modeller in terracotta, several bold portrait busts survive, including a celebrated depiction of George Washington now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes. That he taught Damer is confirmed by J.T. Smith who noted that Ceracchi 'was the Honourable Mrs Damer's master in Sculpture, as that lady declared to me herself.'³ Through Ceracchi, Damer was exposed to the latest currents of European neo-classicism.

Allan Cunningham further mentions that Damer received lessons in anatomy from Dr William Cumberland Cruikshank. Cruikshank was William Hunter's assistant and the author of *The Anatomy of the Absorbing Vessels of the Human Body*, which first appeared in 1786. A series of early anatomical studies by Damer survive in a private collection and demonstrate how diligently she studied the musculature of the human figure. Early studies after the antique, particularly a marble copy of the head of the celebrated Niobe from the Medici collection, suggests that Damer pursued the stages of an academic training, despite being prevented from attending the Academy Schools on grounds of her gender.

Ceracchi celebrated Damer as the Muse of Sculpture in a full-length statue in antique costume now in the British Museum, with tools specifically used for carving in stone at her feet (a mallet,

bullnosed and flat chisels, and a rasp), she is depicted carrying a model, apparently of her own design, depicting the Genius of the Thames. Ceracchi's prominent depiction of Damer as a sculptor, specifically a carver of stone raises the question of what evidence we have that Damer worked in marble herself.

In 1781 Damer visited Italy, Walpole wrote to Horace Mann in Florence that she was so reserved and modest that 'we have by accident discovered that she writes Latin like Pliny and is learning Greek. In Italy she will be a prodigy; she models like Bernini, has excelled the moderns in the similitudes of her busts and has lately begun one in marble.' The bust in marble may well have been Damer's self-portrait which she presented to the Uffizi, however, it was more likely to have been the head of Niobe which Walpole remarks in his Book of Visitors was 'her first attempt'.⁴ Damer's earliest biographers mention that she 'learned the art of working in marble' from John Bacon. This seems entirely plausible, John Bacon ran one of the most successful sculptural workshops in London producing funerary monuments, chimneypieces, garden sculpture as well as portrait busts. Bacon was also chief designer and manager of the Coade Artificial Stone Company. In Bacon's busy studio, Damer could have learnt all she needed about handling marble: from selecting the correct block of stone, to roughing-out the block with punch and mallet, refining the features with chisel and drill and finishing the bust with files, rasps, and abrasives to achieve a smooth surface. Whilst Bacon employed multiple technicians and carvers and made great use of a pointing machine which enabled his assistants to translate his models into full-scale works of sculpture, he was also celebrated as a virtuosic carver. As such, Damer would have had access to a rounded training in handling stone and appreciated the importance of delegating

the more menial aspects of working in marble to technicians.

Thanks to Walpole we have a chronological list of Damer's work, and it is clear from the mid-1780s Damer was regularly completing sculptures in marble. Some of these may have been achieved with the help of a studio assistant, but their routinely rough and uneven finish suggests that Damer worked on them herself. Damer went again to Italy in 1785 returning the following year when Walpole records she made a 'Bust of her mother Lady Ailesbury in terra-cotta, veiled.' This terracotta modello does not survive but was presumably the sketch for the present bust. In 1789 Walpole lists a series of Damer's most celebrated works including 'Miss Farren in marble as Thalia', now in the National Portrait Gallery, London, 'Three bas-reliefs for the Shakespeare Gallery', now lost, these were exceptional neo-classical renderings of scenes from *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* for John Boydell's failed enterprise and 'The King a model in terra-cotta 7 feet high for Glasgow.' This last, called by Damer 'my colossus', was carved from a nine-ton block of Carrara marble for the General Register Office, Edinburgh. The boldly worked sculpture was topped with a bronze crown and sceptre, cast by the clockmaker Benjamin Vulliamy. Amongst this list appears the present bust, 'Her mother in marble.'

This group of works demonstrate Damer's breadth as a designer, working from the intimacy of a portrait bust to monumental public sculpture. But it was her advanced and singular neo-classicism which so marks out her work. Her frequent trips to the Continent meant she was abreast of the prevailing currents of European art, she collected fragments of antique sculpture, owned and studied antique gems (including a Roman onyx and gold ring with a carved chimera, ploughed up in a field in Beverley). Her library of works on classical sculpture

shows the level of her knowledge and research in this area; alongside the classic works of Montfaucon, Perrault, Belloni, Stuart and Revett there were books on Herculaneum, Spalatro, ancient numismatics and gems, and European collections of antique sculpture. Unlike most of her male contemporaries, Damer read both Ancient Greek and Latin and her library lists many texts in these languages.

The boldly Grecian bust ranks as one of Damer's most impressive and captivating portraits. Damer has shown her mother as an antique matron, starkly portraying her with almost archaic features; large, almond-shaped eyes, the flat bridge of the nose and regular wave of her hair. But this severely classical style belies the feeling of great intimacy in the delicacy of the handling and in the tender message engraved in the Greek inscription: 'Friend and Mother'. The sitter's slight smile and regular, beautiful features all point to the bond that existed between mother and daughter. The bust itself shows signs of Damer's technique; the hair was created by drilling and some of the drill marks are still evident. As with other busts of the period, including her depiction of *Prince Lubormirski* of 1788 in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Damer places the bust on a socle which is variously inscribed on the front and sides of the socle in Latin. The bust itself is signed in Greek.

The stark symmetry of design and bold handling of both the sitter's hair and deeply cut costume all recall ancient busts, particularly archaic Greek sculpture. This veiled figure, proudly proclaiming her mother's Campbell lineage and evidently intended to be viewed from below, it may well have been specifically designed for her mother's tomb at St Mary's, Sundridge in Kent. Lady Ailesbury had been born at Coombe Bank in Sundridge, which belonged successively to her father and brother, Lord Frederick Campbell. Damer made a second version of



Giuseppe Ceracchi
The Hon Mrs Anne Seymour Damer as the Muse of Sculpture
Marble · 71¼ inches · 1810 mm
© The Trustees of the British Museum

the bust which was eventually set-up in the chancel at St Mary's, Sundridge.

The most vivid accounts of Lady Ailesbury come from Horace Walpole: 'Her face and person were charming, lively she was, almost to *étourderie*, and so agreeable she was that I never heard her mentioned afterwards by one of her contemporaries who did not prefer her as the most perfect creature they ever saw.' The handsome Lady Ailesbury was well-read, being particularly interested in Rousseau, for whom she secured a pension of £100 a year. Amongst her close circle were the historian, David Hume, the writers Gray, Thomson and Shenstone and the painters Reynolds and Angelica Kauffmann. Lady Ailesbury was herself celebrated for the remarkable copies after old masters she rendered in embroidery.

Damer continued to exhibit at the Royal Academy until 1818, showing a mixture of portrait busts, sculptures of animals and designs for major public projects, including a monument for Admiral Nelson in 1807. Damer produced a pantheon of portraits of celebrated men of her age including Nelson, whom she had met in Naples, Joseph Banks, Sir Humphry Davy and Charles James Fox. Damer's reputation grew considerably in her lifetime. Contemporaries marvelled at her technical virtuosity and the novelty of a female sculptor. By 1804 critics articulated the belief that she was the greatest sculptor of the day, a claim which reached a height in an article in the *Morning Post* penned by Thomas Hope in which he proclaimed Damer as the personification of romantic genius – working without assistants, reducing art to an intellectual form, and wiping the floor with mere modellers, workmen, and businessmen who constituted the profession. It was these unsought encomia which undoubtedly upset her earliest biographers who presented her as an aristocratic curiosity. These assessments

have clouded later scholarship, along with the persistent contemporary rumours about her personal life and close female friendships. Framed as Sapphic, Damer's sexuality became the subject of lurid speculation.⁵ As Greg Sullivan has recently observed it is these competing aspects of Damer's biography and career which complicate any evaluation of her sculpture: 'today, although we are slightly hamstrung by an absence of documentation, we are perhaps more open to sympathetic interpretation of Damer's work. Even so, the complex mix, in one career of sculptural, gender and sexual politics, autodidacticism, European neoclassicism, and class, perhaps still might lead us to conclude that 'the oddity of her achievement is striking.'⁶

Most of her surviving works are in public collections, and this is one of the few portrait busts to have appeared on the market in recent years.

NOTES

1. Alison Yarrington, 'The Female Pygmalin: Anne Seymour Damer, Allan Cunningham and the writing of a woman sculptor's life,' *The Sculpture Journal*, vol.1, 1997, pp.32-44.
2. Damer restored a bust of Jupiter Serapis for Horace Walpole and repaired the beak on Walpole's famed Boccapaduli Eagle.
3. John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, London, 1828, vol.II, p.120.
4. Ed. W. S. Lewis, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, New Haven and London, 1944, vol.XII, p.272.
5. Emma Donoghue, 'Random Shafts of Malice: The Outings of Anne Seymour Damer', in *Lesbian Dames: Sapphism in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. John C. Beynon and Caroline Gonda, Ashgate, 2010, pp.127-146.
6. Greg Sullivan, 'Anne Seymour Damer's Odd Achievement', in ed. Michael Snodin, *Anne Seymour Damer: Sculpture & Society*, exh. cat., 2014, p.7.

BELISARIUS

Oil on canvas
24¼ × 18 inches · 61.5 × 45.5cm
Signed lower right: 'B. West 1805'

COLLECTIONS

Offered by Benjamin West's sons to the United States in 1826;
West sale, Robins, 22–25 May 1829, lot 54 (£26.5.0);
Sir Oswald Mosley, 2nd Bt (1785–1871), Rolleston Hall, Staffordshire, bought at the above sale;
John Burton Philips (1785–1847), Heath House, Upper Tean, Staffordshire, acquired from the above;
By descent at Heath House, Staffordshire until 2022;
Philips sale, Mellors & Kirk, Nottingham, 12 April, 2022, lot 104;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

Henry Moses, *The Gallery of Pictures Painted by Benjamin West Esqr., historical painter to His Majesty & President of the Royal Academy engraved in outline by Henry Moses*, London, 1811, pl.III;
Helmut Von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, New Haven and London, 1986, p.185, no.44 (illustrated)

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, 1805, no.145 (Belisarius and the boy – Vide Marmontel);
London, British Institution, 1806, no.46 (Belisarius and the boy, begging arms);
London, West's Gallery, 1821, no.84,
London, West's Gallery, 1822–1828, no.8;
Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, *American Artists in Europe 1800–1900*, 1976, cat.no.71

This small painting by Benjamin West was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1805. It is one of several works West made of the general Belisarius depicted as a blind beggar. The iconography derived from the novel *Bélisaire* published by François Marmontel in 1767, which perpetuated the apocryphal story that Belisarius, after a long and successful career serving the Emperor Justinian, was blinded and reduced to begging at the Pincian Gate in Rome. The image of the loyal soldier reduced to penury by a tyrannous ruler found enormous popularity in the last decades of the eighteenth century and formed the basis of celebrated paintings by Jacques-Louis David (Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille) amongst others. Marmontel's text stressed the pathos of the situation by introducing a young boy who helps the aged Belisarius by begging for alms on his behalf. West followed Marmontel, even mentioning his name in

the catalogue of the Royal Academy when this painting was exhibited there in 1805, but as Von Erffa and Staley have pointed out, this painting does not illustrate a specific passage from the book itself. Preserved in excellent condition this small work remained in West's studio until sold by his sons in 1829.

By 1805 Benjamin West was President of the Royal Academy and the pre-eminent history painter in Britain. Born in Pennsylvania, West had trained in Rome from 1760 to 1763 before establishing a hugely successful and diverse practice in London. A drawing by West, now in the Morgan Library & Museum, seems to have been his first treatment of the subject, it shows the blind, old soldier seated on a Roman capital being recognised by his soldiers. West developed the composition in a painting now in the Detroit Institute of Arts, dated 1802, focusing on the seated



Henry Moses, after Henry Corbould, after Benjamin West *Belisarius*
Engraving on chine collé · 9⅞ × 7⅞ inches
238 × 201mm
Published May 1. 1811 by H. Moses, 65, Newman St
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Belisarius and his young companion. Belisarius is shown with his hand upon the young boy, who holds Belisarius's helmet outstretched for alms. The present painting develops the Detroit composition, showing the seated Belisarius, downcast and staff in hand, with his arm upon the young boy who looks out at the viewer arms outstretched imploring our sympathy for the old general. On the wall above Belisarius West has placed a tablet inscribed 'DATE OBOLUM BELISARIO' which translates as 'Give a penny to Belisarius'. This is a formula of words not found in Marmontel, but prominently visible in the most notable contemporary treatment of the subject in paint, David's 1781 canvas which West could have known through Antonie Alexandre Morel's engraving published in 1793. West has based the figure of Belisarius on a notable artists' model, George White, who appears in a number of works by West, Joshua Reynolds and other notable painters of the period.

Lushly painted, this work shows West's enduring interest in Venetian art; the shimmering highlights, rich colours and thickly applied paint all point to his veneration of the works of Titian. The painting remained in West's studio until his death, it was part of a group of West's paintings offered by his sons to the United States in 1826, eventually selling in London in 1829. It was acquired by the Staffordshire landowner John Burton Philips for Heath House, where it remained until 2022.



Benjamin West
The Pilgrim Mourning His Dead Ass
 Oil on canvas · 19 1/2 × 14 1/2 inches
 498 × 365 mm · 1800
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of the family of Joseph S. Cullinan, 53.4 · Photograph ©The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Dave Crossley



Benjamin West *Belisarius Recognized by His Soldiers*
 Pen and brown ink on paper
 65/16 × 7 1/8 inches · 160 × 182 mm
 The Morgan Library & Museum
 Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Robert H. Charles 1970 11:71



JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER 1775–1851

BONNEVILLE, SAVOY

Oil on panel
13¾ × 19¼ inches · 349 × 489 mm
Painted c.1804–6

COLLECTIONS

Commissioned by Walter Fawkes of Farnley (1769–1825);
Fawkes sale, Christie's, 27 June 1890, lot 60 (as *Peasants driving sheep in the Apennines*), 770 guineas bought by Vokins;
Edward Lewis Raphael (1830–1903), by 1893;
Leggatt Bros. by 1927;
The Hon Mrs Whitelaw Reid (1857–1931), New York, acquired from the above in 1927;
Ogden Mills Reid, son of the above;
Reid sale, *Art treasures and furnishings of Ophir Hall the residence of the late Mrs. Whitelaw Reid*, American Art Association, New York, 14–18 May 1935, lot 1178
(as *A Scene in the Apennines*), \$1,900;
E. & A. Silberman Galleries, New York, acquired at the above sale;

Vixseboxse Art Galleries, Cleveland, Ohio;
Private collection, USA, acquired from the above in 1968;
And by descent to 2020;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE

Walter Thornbury, *The Life of J.M.W. Turner RA*, 2 vols., London, 1862, ii, p.393.
The Athenaeum, October 4th, 1879, p.439;
Walter Thornbury, *The Life of J.M.W. Turner RA*, 1897, p.589, as 'landscape' painted between 1808–16;
Sir Walter Armstrong, *Turner*, London, 1902, p.218 (as *Scene in the Apennines* and painted between 1803–5);
A. J. Finberg, *Turner's Watercolours at Farnley Hall*, n.d [1912], p.20;
Andrew Wilton, *J.M.W. Turner: His Art and Life*, Milan, 1979, p.268, cat.no.P148;
John Gage (ed.), *Collected Correspondence of*

J.M.W. Turner, Oxford 1980, p.254;
Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner*, New Haven and London, 1984, vol.I, p.112, cat.no.148, vol.II, plate 153;
Eds. Evelyn Joll, Martin Butlin and Luke Herrmann, *The Oxford Companion to J.M.W. Turner*, Oxford, 2001, p.105

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, 1893, no.26 (as *In the Apennines*, lent by E.L. Raphael);
London, Corporation of London Art Gallery, Guildhall, *A Loan Collection of Pictures and Drawings by J.M.W. Turner RA, and a Selection of Pictures by some of his Contemporaries*, 1899, no.11 (as *Scene in the Apennines*, lent by E.L. Raphael);
Birmingham, City Museum and Art Gallery, *A Loan Collection of Pictures and Drawings by J.M.W. Turner RA., 1899*, no.1;
Cleveland, Ohio, The Cleveland Museum of Art, on loan 2011–2020



Joseph Mallord William Turner
Bonneville
Watercolour · 12 × 17¼ inches
308 × 437 mm · 1802
© The Trustees of the British Museum,
Lloyd Bequest





This exquisite, important but little-known oil was painted by Turner following his first trip to the Continent in 1802. Commissioned by Turner's great patron, Walter Fawkes and unusually painted on panel, this evocative landscape is preserved in outstanding condition. The brief cessation of fighting between Britain and France in March 1802 allowed Turner to visit the Continent for the first time. The trip afforded Turner the opportunity of experiencing new types of terrain, most importantly the Alps. Turner filled eleven sketchbooks with studies during his trip, making numerous water-colour sketches of the town of Bonneville, close to Geneva. In spite of Bonneville being an unimpressive settlement, it offered Turner his first view of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps and as a result a wholly new form of landscape. Painted in London this exceptional work belongs to a key moment in his career, Turner had recently been elected a Royal Academician and he was rapidly becoming the most successful professional landscape painter in Britain. In this view of Bonneville, with its shimmering, limpid light and vaporous recession of the distant mountains, Turner neatly communicates, in oil, all the qualities of light and fleeting atmospheric effects found in his finest watercolours. Oils by Turner are increasingly rare on the market and this example is one of the best preserved and best documented examples from a key moment in his career.

The Peace of Amiens, signed in March 1802, meant that, for the first time in nine years ordinary travellers were again able to cross the channel, and Turner was among the many British artists who flocked to Paris and beyond. He was on the Continent from 15 July to mid-October, travelling in some style, accompanied by a Durham country gentleman and amateur artist, Newbey Lowson, through France and Switzerland, but not quite reaching Italy.¹ Turner left

Paris in July bound for Lyons, Grenoble, the Grande Chartreuse and Geneva. By 1802 Geneva had become established as a sort of basecamp from which to make the expedition to Mont Blanc. Turner and Lowson would have set out from Chamonix on foot on a grand tour of the mountain, making arrangements at Geneva for their Swiss guide to take their carriage to meet them at Martigny. Without the carriage there was nothing now to insulate Turner from the direct immersion in the spectacular and sublime landscape.

As David Hill has established the fifty miles from Geneva to Chamonix was at least two or three days' journey.² The first leg to Bonneville would have been a full day on foot. When Percy Bysshe Shelley made the journey in 1816, he described Bonneville as 'a neat little town, with no conspicuous peculiarity, except the white towers of the prison, an extensive building overlooking the town. At Bonneville the Alps commence, one of which, clothed by forests, rises almost immediately from the opposite bank of the Arve.' Turner was captivated by the town and its setting. He immediately took three quick sketches of the bridge and valley in the 'France, Savoy, Piedmont' (TB LXIII) sketchbook, before taking out the large leather-bound 'St Gothard and Mont Blanc' (TB LXXV) sketchbook which he had brought with him from England. Apart from a sketch of the Isère valley from above La Frette it was still empty. Evidently, he had been saving it for the main objects of the tour and it seems that at Bonneville, he felt he had arrived. Turner made two sketches of views approaching the town, which were to become some of the most productive of all his studies. As we shall see, these studies formed the basis of no fewer than three finished oil paintings, three finished watercolours and an illustration for the *Liber Studiorum*.

On the return journey he spent some three weeks in Paris, during which he filled the small 'Studies in the Louvre' sketchbook with numerous heavily annotated copies after Titian, Poussin, Rubens, and others. On this journey he used eleven sketchbooks in all, some of them quite large, with a total of over four hundred drawings, forming a major resource which would fuel Turner's creativity back in London. The Royal Academy exhibition of 1803, for which Turner was on the hanging committee for the first time, presented the new academician at full strength with five oil paintings and two watercolours, all derived from the experiences of his 1802 tour. Four of the paintings reflected the powerful impact of his study of Poussin, Claude, and Titian in the Louvre. Two of the oils developed sketches made near Bonneville, including *Bonneville, Savoy with Mont Blanc* now in the Dallas Museum of Art and the *Chateaux de St. Michael, Bonneville, Savoy* now at the Yale Center for British Art. In May, the diarist Joseph Farington recorded many varied comments among fellow artists about Turner and his work; on 13 May he himself summed up Turner as 'confident, presumptuous,—with talent.'³

The present oil is on a more intimate scale than his exhibition works and consequently preserves the intensity of a work made *en plein air*. It is derived from a watercolour Turner made in the 'St Gothard and Mont Blanc' sketchbook (TB LXXV), which, along with eight other sheets, was later removed, probably by Ruskin, who particularly admired this series. The watercolour is now in the Lloyd Collection at the British Museum.⁴ Turner placed the chateau of St Michael at the centre of the composition, crowning the skyline and interrupting the view of the Mont Blanc massif, touched in with white gouache, with the famous peak itself to the left. In the oil Turner developed features of the original watercolour sketch,

framing the distinctive profile of the castle against a view of the distant alps. In the oil, Turner explores all the atmospheric potential of the watercolour, showing a summer scene filled with light: the sky is animated by scudding clouds and the distant peaks of the Alps dissolve into the sky itself. The carefully structured composition shows Turner's evident fascination with the works of Claude and Gaspard Dughet. A large herd of sheep spill down into the river Arve in the foreground of the composition, which is in shadow, two figures are shown seated on the bank to the left, shown in full sun, whilst the tree on the left is a careful transposition of the life-study in the 'St Gothard and Mont Blanc' sketchbook page.

In the oil the castle extending along the crest of the ridge is handled with much greater definition than in the sketch, as are the two groups of subsidiary buildings



Etched by Joseph Mallord William Turner and engraved by Henry Dawe, *Bonneville, Savoy from the Liber Studiorum*
Etching and mezzotint, printed in brown ink
7½ × 10⅞ inches · 191 × 276 mm 1816, 2nd state
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection



Joseph Mallord William Turner
Bonneville
Oil on canvas · 36½ × 48¼ inches
27 × 1225 mm · 1803
Dallas Museum of Art,
Foundation for the Arts Collection



Joseph Mallord William Turner
Chateaux de St. Michael, Bonneville, Savoy
Oil on canvas · 36 × 48 inches
914 × 1219 mm · 1803
Yale Center for British Art,
Paul Mellon Collection

lower down the hill. The flock of sheep in the foreground provides an important counterpoint to this distant drama of the mountains; it is evidently integral to Turner's conception of the place, in helping create the maximum sense of contrast between a familiar rural scene and the unique spectacle of the distant mountains. In the plate of Bonneville, he prepared for the Liber Studiorum, although he chose a different view, Turner at one stage intended the subject to belong to the category of 'Epic Pastoral', though he subsequently reclassified it as 'Mountainous'.⁵

The present painting was commissioned by the Yorkshire landowner Walter Fawkes in around 1804.⁶ As Shelley identified, Bonneville was the point on the southern route at which the traveller first views Mont

Blanc and this may explain its popularity, not just with Turner, but with patrons. Fawkes almost certainly visited Turner's gallery which opened for the first time two weeks before the Royal Academy exhibition in April 1804. Fawkes commissioned three large Alpine watercolours, two of which Turner completed the same year: *The Passage of Mount St Gothard, taken from the centre of the Teufels Broch, Switzerland*, now at Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal and *Fall of the Reichebach* now at The Higgins, Bedford.⁷ In all, Fawkes ordered some thirty Alpine views from Turner's 1802 sketchbooks. It seems likely that Fawkes commissioned the view of *Bonneville* in around 1804, it was the first of a sequence of six oils by Turner that Fawkes acquired for the drawing room of his house, Farnley Hall in Yorkshire.



Joseph Mallord William Turner *Drawing Room, Farnley*
Bodycolour on buff paper · 12½ × 16¼ inches · 315 × 412 mm · 1818
Private collection · Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

The present painting is shown hanging in the drawing room in a study made by Turner in around 1818, hanging on the wall adjacent to the great *Dort Packet-Boat from Rotterdam Becalmed* now at the Yale Center for British Art.

When in Fawkes's collection, the title of the painting became confused. Fawkes listed the painting as simply 'A Landscape' and Walter Thornbury identified it as a view in the Apennines, it was Butlin and Joll who first correctly re-identified the subject-matter.

When in the collection of Walter Fawkes, the painting was enthusiastically described in *The Athenaeum*:

NOTES

1. Eric Shanes, *Young Mr Turner: The First Forty Years 1775-1815*, New Haven and London, 2016, pp.223-237.
2. David Hill, *Turner in the Alps: The Journey through France and Switzerland in 1802*, London, 1992, pp.46-48.
3. Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, New Haven and London, 1979, vol.VI, p.2030.
4. Kim Sloan, *J.M.W. Turner: Watercolours from the R.W. Lloyd Bequest to the British Museum*, London, 1998, p.9.
5. Gillian Forrester, 'Turner's 'Drawing Book': The Liber Studiorum', London, 1996, p.126, no.64.
6. For Fawkes and his collection see David Hill, *Turner's Birds: Bird Studies from Farnley Hall*, Oxford, 1988, pp.9-24.
7. Eric Shanes, *Young Mr Turner: The First Forty Years 1775-1815*, New Haven and London, 2016, p.254.
8. *The Athenaeum*, October 4th, 1879, p.439.

We have now arrived at Turner's oil paintings which adorn Mrs Fawkes's drawing-room at Farnley. No private apartment in England is so rich in Turners; with the exception which dated 1827, its ornaments are of the great master's best time, and acquired by Mr. Walter Fawkes from the artist before the friendship between them was interrupted by his death. We shall describe the pictures in their order on the walls ... If Mr Ruskin will permit us to suppose that Turner had been impressed by Gaspar Poussin - and we can hardly doubt that the elder master's pathos and sentiment must have struck the younger on not a few occasions - then the dignified and solemn romance called 'In the Apennines' may have owed a little of its poetry to Poussin. It refers to the very land of Gaspar, and treats that country in the old master's peculiar fashion, with, there cannot be a doubt, a far more searching, learned, and reverent feeling than had prevailed before the time of the painter, and with more knowledge than has been employed since then in combination with so grave and beautiful a sentiment. It shows a shallow valley, with a pool in front, towards which a flock of sheep are being driven. In the middle distance a castle stands on a rock; the scene is full of verdurous masses of trees. Every element has been made to subserve a poetical impression, and in the very disposing of the lines of the composition are to be seen dignity, repose, and beauty. This picture is named 'Landscape' in Mr. F. H. Fawkes's list, and this lack of a definite title induces us to consider it as a 'composition.' It may even have been made by Turner to illustrate his own notions of his power to use, and to exalt in use, the very materials affected by Gaspar Poussin.⁸

JOHN RUSKIN 1819–1900

THE CLOISTER OF SAN GREGORIO, VENICE

Pencil, watercolour with touches of gouache
13½ × 19¾ inches · 343 × 493 mm
Inscribed by Ruskin left centre: 'sepia gamboge'
and lower left: 'note reflected light / under
cornice of Salute / bright warm white / casting
shadows'

Inscribed on the verso in another hand: 'Miss
Tovey, 29 Paddington Street, Portman Square'
Drawn May 1846

COLLECTIONS

Probably, with Lucy and Harriet Tovey,
29 Paddington Street, c.1874–6;
Fine Art Society, by 1969;
Virginia Surtees (1917–2017), acquired from the
above;
James Dearden, a gift from the above;
By descent, to 2022

LITERATURE

Robert Hewison, *Ruskin and Venice*, London,
1978, p.30, repr;
Robert Hewison, *Ruskin on Venice: The Paradise
of Cities*, New Haven and London, 2003, p.128,
repr

EXHIBITED

Louisville, Speed Art Museum, *Ruskin and
Venice*, 1978, cat.no.50;
Venice, Museo Correr, *Venezia nell'ottocento
immagini e mito*, 1983, cat.no.116

**It is the loveliest cortile I know in
Venice; its capitals consummate in
design and execution; and the low
wall on which they stand showing
remnants of sculpture unique, as far
as I know, in such application.¹**

This spectacular watercolour of a small
courtyard in Venice is one of the most
complex and fully developed studies Ruskin
made on his visit to the city in 1846. Made
over five mornings in May of that year,
the watercolour shows Ruskin's delight in
the palimpsest of Venetian architecture,
showing the picturesque fourteenth-
century cloister overshadowed by the great
Baroque domes of Baldassare Longhena's
Santa Maria della Salute. Constructed with
remarkable care, Ruskin has faithfully
recorded the profiles of windows, the blind
arcading on the walls of the church of San
Gregorio and the cloister capitals, a fact



Carlo Naya
Courtyard of the Abbey of San Gregorio
Albumen print · 9½ × 7½ inches · 242 × 190 mm · c.1870
Archive Farms Inc / Alamy Stock Photo

that points to the role drawings such as this
would eventually play in Ruskin's great liter-
ary projects. By 1846 Ruskin was beginning
to collect material for both *The Seven Lamps
of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*, the
first volume of which appeared in print in
1851. As such, this drawing offers a remark-
able insight into Ruskin's engagement
with Venice at a crucial point in his career,
preserved in spectacular condition, this is
arguably one of Ruskin's most beautiful and
most compelling Venetian watercolours.

In April 1846 Ruskin set off for the
Continent with his parents following the
publication of the second volume of *Modern
Painters*. They arrived in Venice on 14th May
and remained for two weeks. We know,
thanks to the diary of Ruskin's valet, 'George'
Hobbs, that Ruskin began this watercolour
on his first morning in the city. His diary
entry for 15th May reads: 'went out a little
after six with Mr John, in a gondola, to an
old convent on the Grand Canal the inside
of which he wanted to sketch. Stopped
there till 8.' The church and abbey of San
Gregorio is situated on the Dorsoduro close
to the entrance of the Grand Canal, the
Benedictine monastery had closed in 1807.
On May 16th Hobbs recorded that it 'is now
a cork-cutters, but the square court is very
old, and the domes of the church of the
Madonna della Salute, apparently hanging
over it, make it very picturesque.' It was
evidently the striking effect of Longhena's
domes overshadowing the courtyard which
particularly appealed to Ruskin, seated in
the Northwest corner of the cloister, Ruskin
captures the fall of shadow from the domes
across the eastern and southern sides of the
cloister. Ruskin himself was not immune to
the picturesque effect of the space calling it,





in *The Stones of Venice*, 'the loveliest cortile I know in Venice.'

Following the publication of *Modern Painters* Ruskin was increasingly thinking about architecture as a separate topic for research. This explains the careful focus on specific architectural elements in this sheet: the mass of brick arches on the side of the San Gregorio itself, visible above the cloister, the profile of the various capitals and the pointed gothic windows looking into the cloister. But Ruskin's plans were still not fully focused. Ruskin's father wrote to William Henry Harrison from Venice on 25th May 1846:

He is cultivating art at present, searching for real knowledge, but to you and me this is at present a sealed book. It will neither take the shape of picture nor poetry. It is gathered in scraps hardly wrought, for he is drawing perpetually, but no drawing such as in former days you or I might compliment in the usual way by saying it deserved a frame; but fragments of everything from a Cupola to a Cart-wheel, but in such bits that it is to the common eye a mass of Hieroglyphics – all true – truth itself, but Truth in mosaic.²

Formally more fully developed than a mere fragment, this watercolour shows Ruskin's complete absorption in the city and its details. Hobbs's diary records the extraordinary time and discipline that went into completing this watercolour. Ruskin worked for five consecutive mornings from 6am to 8am, to ensure the consistency of the morning light. Whilst this sheet is more scenographic than some of Ruskin's more focused architectural studies, we can decode the impulses which compelled him to make this sustained watercolour. For Ruskin the domes of Santa Maria della Salute were indelibly associated with the works of JMW Turner and he was evidently attracted to this unusual view in part, due to his reverence for Turner's great *Venice, from the porch of Madonna della Salute* (Metropolitan

Museum of Art, New York). Ruskin was also probably making a mental audit of the great surviving fragments of Gothic architecture in the city. We know Ruskin was reading Robert Willis's *Remarks on the Architecture of the Middle Ages, especially Italy*. The complex of San Gregorio contained a number of details which would be discussed and illustrated at length in *The Stones of Venice*, particularly the main door to the church. In his published gazetteer of Venetian architecture, Ruskin dated the cloister to 1350, making it contemporaneous with the Doge's Palace and thus central to his arguments about the moral purpose of Gothic architecture.

It is the fall of light which clearly captivated Ruskin, he notes on the base of the column on the left of the sheet: *note reflected light / under cornice of Salute / bright warm white / casting shadows*. Ruskin uses pools of saturated watercolour wash to suggest the fall of light and shadow across the complex architecture, with the bold raking diagonal of the cloister bisecting the page. Ruskin has applied a warm pink wash to the right-hand side of the paper, to suggest the walls and floor of the cloister, this has been blotted off in places and overlaid with a wash of brown to give a rich effect of shadow. The crisp morning light is emphasised by Ruskin's sparing use of white gouache to pick out the grill on the well-head and the profile of one of the cloister capitals. The technique owes much to Ruskin's profound interest in the works of Turner. By 1846 Ruskin had begun to commission daguerreotypes of notable architectural features, but he was always conscious of the limitations of the process, preferring to draw wider angled views himself and use watercolour to capture complex, diffuse light effects.

Ruskin spent the winters of 1849–50 and 1851–2 in Venice researching *The Stones of Venice*, recalling with distaste: 'I went through so much hard, dry, mechanical toil there, that I quite lost, before I left it, the



John Ruskin *Doge's Palace, Venice: 36th Capital*
Pencil, black ink and ink wash.
8 3/4 x 9 1/4 inches · 223 x 235 mm 1849
© The Ruskin, Lancaster University

charm of the place.' A certain stiffness is discernible in Ruskin's late Venetian drawings, as he enumerates architectural details. By contrast, this lush, light filled watercolour is an unusually successful and complete statement, showing Ruskin's technical facility and remarkable power as a watercolourist. Preserved in beautiful condition this sheet is first recorded as belonging to the sisters Lucy and Harriet Tovey servants of Ruskin, who were given charge of Ruskin's short-lived tearoom in Paddington. It was subsequently in the collection of the great Rossetti scholar, Virginia Surtees who then gave it to the Ruskin scholar, James Dearden. It has not been on the market since 1969 and has never appeared at auction.

NOTES

1. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin: Library Edition*, vol.111, p.320.
2. Quoted in Ian Jeffrey, 'Fatal Praise: John Ruskin and the Daguerreotype', in ed. Christopher Newall, *John Ruskin: Artist and Observer*, exh. cat., Ottawa (National Gallery of Canada), p.70.

JOHN CONSTABLE 1776–1837

WEST LODGE, EAST BERGHOLT, WITH A HATCHMENT

Oil on canvas
16¾ × 13¼ inches · 415 × 335 mm
Painted July 1812

COLLECTIONS

Artist's sale, Foster's 16 May 1838, lot 3, 'Exterior of a Country Mansion with a Hatchment', bought by Smith;
John Smith & Son, 137 New Bond Street;
C.R Leslie (1794–1859);
Leslie sale, Foster's, 25 April 1860, lot 8;
Sir Arthur Russell (1878–1964), Swallowfield Park;
Russell sale, Sotheby's, 23 November 1977, lot 130;
Private collection, UK, acquired 1980;
And by descent, 2022

LITERATURE

R. Hooze, *L'Opera completa di Constable*, Milan, 1979, no.6;
Leslie Parris, *The Tate Gallery Constable collection: a catalogue*, London, 1981, see under cat.no.6;
Graham Reynolds, *The Early paintings and drawings of John Constable*, New Haven and London, 1996, cat.no.12.28, pp.170–171

The Hatchment for poor Mrs Roberts gave the house a melancholy aspect.

John Constable writing to Maria Bicknell, July 10th, 1812

This little-known atmospheric upright format landscape is one of a group of deeply personal works that chronicle changes in Constable's native Suffolk village. In this instance it commemorates the death of Sarah Roberts, an intimate friend and neighbour of the Constable family at East Bergholt. This fluidly painted work depicts West Lodge, one of the principal houses in the village situated opposite the Constable house on Church Street, a place that appears in numerous paintings made by Constable throughout his life. This painting is unusual because it commemorates a very specific event. In December 1811 Constable's mother, Ann, wrote to him explaining that 'Dunthorne has completed his achievement and exceeding well done indeed.'¹ The 'achievement' was the armorial hatchment that was set-up above the front door of West Lodge following Sarah Roberts' death, painted by John Dunthorne senior. As was the custom in the early nineteenth century, the hatchment remained in place for six months following Sarah Roberts' death, prompting John Constable to note in a letter to Maria Bicknell that it 'gave the house a melancholy aspect.'

Constable famously observed to his friend and patron, John Fisher: 'I should paint my own places best – Painting is but another word for feeling.' This revelation underscores the power of Constable's most successful works: the paintings that captured the familiar views of his native

Suffolk, the views which he invested with the most emotion. The present brooding landscape is a rare occasion where we can categorically decode Constable's 'feelings.'

Sarah Roberts was a fixture in Constable's early life. She had moved to East Bergholt with her husband Philip in about 1756 and remained after his death. She was held in high regard by the community and was evidently a close friend of the Constable family appearing regularly in Ann Constable's letters to her son. In the August of 1809 Ann Constable reported: 'Mrs Roberts poorly – she says she always thinks of you, at the setting sun, thro' her trees. Surely this is a kind retention at 86 – but in conformity to her whole system of kindness to us.' The view from (and of) the lawn of West Lodge was one that had an enduring appeal for Constable. He noted to Maria Bicknell in November 1811, shortly before Sarah Roberts' death, 'I have tried Flatford Mill again – from the lock – and some smaller things – one of them (a view of Mrs Roberts's lawn, by the summer's evening) has become quite a pet with me.'² This view would endure in Constable's imagination, eventually becoming a plate in his 1830–2 publication *Various Subjects of Landscape, Characteristic of English Scenery*. The familiar red brick façade of West Lodge, with its pedimented doorcase, white picket fence and framing clumps of trees became a regular subject for Constable around 1811.

The Constable family correspondence reveals that John, in London, received regular updates on Sarah Roberts' death, funeral and bequests. The Constables had all been left mourning rings and 'a goldsmith from Colchester' came to fit them.³ Ann Constable was delighted to receive a



painting Constable had painted for West Lodge and news was given of Dunthorne's hatchment.⁴ This provides powerful context for the present painting. Constable was evidently moved by the death of his old neighbour and the loss of a fixed presence in the community. He captures the familiar view of West Lodge from an oblique angle, the handsome brick front shielded by the screen of trees. In Constable's other sketches of West Lodge, he chooses an elongated landscape format, here the choice of an upright format adds to the sense of melancholy, the trees crowd the house and the full summer canopies almost block out the light. Constable shows a changeable sky, the carefully observed dynamic of the weather somehow underscoring the gloomy atmosphere of the painting.

Constable had experimented with upright landscapes from 1802 and was aware of a number of Claude's upright compositions, including one he copied.⁵ This boldly conceived work eschews Claudian idealism and instead conjures the sombre qualities of Jacob van Ruisdael's *Jewish Cemetery*, a painting Constable admired greatly. Conceived as an easel painting,

rather than a rapid oil sketch, this grand painting was executed on the scale of a Dutch cabinet painting. It is possible that for Constable the bold hatchment recalled the placement of similar armorials in views of Dutch golden age church interiors, certainly the hatchment and open-door act as the focal point of the painting. Constable has animated the painting by including a single figure on the left: a woman in a distinctive red shawl and black bonnet, the same figure appears in countless of Constable's paintings at this date, including a slightly earlier view of West Lodge now in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.⁶

Executed with Constable's characteristic technical facility, this painting offers a more profound insight into Constable's concept of landscape than mere painterly effect. The melancholy atmosphere and sense of sombre foreboding is not imagined but designed. Recording, as it does, the death of a pillar of East Bergholt's community, the painting ranks as a profound autobiographical document, a rare instance in which we can accurately read the 'feeling' behind Constable's painting.



NOTES

1. Ed. R. B. Beckett, *John Constable's Correspondence*, Ipswich, 1962, vol.1, p.72.
2. Ed. R. B. Beckett, *John Constable's Correspondence*, Ipswich, 1964, vol.11, p.54.
3. Ed. R. B. Beckett, *John Constable's Correspondence*, Ipswich, 1962, vol.1, p.71.
4. Ed. R. B. Beckett, *John Constable's Correspondence*, Ipswich, 1962, vol.1, p.72.
5. Mark Evans, 'Copying: 'a more lasting remembrance'', in Ed. Mark Evans, *John Constable: The Making of a Master*, exh. cat. London (Victorian and Albert Museum) pp.107-129.
6. For other views of West Lodge see: Graham Reynolds, *The Early paintings and drawings of John Constable*, New Haven and London, 1996, cat. nos 11.33 and 11.40.

John Constable *West Lodge, East Bergholt*
Oil on paper laid on panel
5¼ × 11¾ inches · 146 × 298 mm · c.1811
Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection



JOHN LINNELL 1792–1882

SHEPHERDS

Oil on paper laid down on panel
6½ × 8¾ inches · 165 × 222 mm
Signed bottom centre: 'J. Linnell'
Inscribed on a label on the verso: 'Shepherds
by John Linnell fecit /Lent by James Orrock /
8 links up right of fireplace'
Painted c.1830–5

COLLECTIONS

James Orrock (1829–1913) 48 Bedford Square,
London;
R. C. Vose, Boston;
Private collection to 2002;
Private collection, USA, to 2020;
Lowell Libson and Jonny Yarker Ltd, 2020.

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, *Exhibition of works
by the Old Masters and by deceased masters
of the British School including a special
selection from the works of John Linnell and
Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Winter 1883, no.99
'Shepherds.'

This luminous, small-scale landscape was painted by John Linnell at a significant moment of his development as an artist. In 1818 Linnell had met William Blake. Their shared approach to both art and religion resulted in a strong connection and Linnell was to play an important part in Blake's last years, commissioning the engravings for the *Book of Job* in 1823 and the astounding series of watercolours for Dante's *Divine Comedy* in 1824. It was Linnell who was to introduce Samuel Palmer to William Blake in 1824, Palmer noted that: 'it pleased God to send Mr Linnell as a good angel from Heaven to pluck me from the pit of modern art.' Linnell, in turn, visited Palmer at Shoreham in the late 1820s, their surviving correspondence reveals a stimulating relationship, not without its tensions.

Palmer increasingly rejected naturalism, seeing it as a diversion from his mission to paint his inner visions in keeping with Blake. Linnell, by contrast, was passionately interested in observing the natural world. As a student at the Royal Academy, he had spent time sketching out of doors with other young artists, particularly William Mulready, William Henry Hunt and the more established painter, John Varley. This wonderfully preserved oil demonstrates Linnell's investment in naturalism, whilst the fiery evening sky suggests his awareness of Palmer's visionary works. Painted in the early 1830s, this beautifully preserved oil, is a miniature masterpiece by Linnell.

Linnell's early career was devoted to landscape. When the Society of Painters in Water Colours changed its name to the Society of Painters in Oil and Water Colours in 1813, Linnell was a founding member, and contributed fifty-two works (probably all oils) to its exhibitions between 1813 and 1820. Many of these were based on sketching trips made in 1813, 1814, and 1815. In 1813, with George Robert Lewis, he visited north Wales, where he was impressed by the wild scenery, writing many years later, 'I could almost fancy myself living in the times of Jacob and Esau and might expect to meet their flocks.' Like Palmer, Linnell increasingly viewed his landscape paintings as being more complex than merely representations of the natural world. It was friendship with Cornelius Varley, brother of John, that seems to have stimulated both a religious conversion and a heightened interest in landscape. He joined the Baptist church in January 1812, becoming a member of the chapel at Keppel Street, Bloomsbury, and bought drawing instruments which

would enable him to transcribe what he saw with scientific accuracy. He read the writings of William Paley, whose natural theology encouraged Linnell to regard the study of landscape as a valuable response to the work of God.

The present painting depicts a clearing beside a river, three figures are resting by a fallen tree whilst sheep graze and cattle water in the river, the whole scene is illuminated by the rich, golden glow of sunset. Painted on paper laid down on panel, this limpid landscape can be compared to some of Linnell's finest cabinet works of the period, including the ravishing 1819 landscape *Evening, Storm Clearing Off* now in the Minneapolis Institute of Art. However, the subject-matter and handling of the present work points to Linnell's growing relationship with Palmer. Palmer placed sheep and shepherds at the heart of many of his Shoreham landscapes, and those seen in the foreground of the present work recall Palmer's sheep in particular; the way they are clustered on the ground and articulated with lines of paint. The rich sunset, agricultural workers and peaceable livestock all recall Palmer's greatest Kent landscapes, whilst the rather staccato use of paint, particularly in the construction of the trees on the left bring to mind Palmer's technique in his Shoreham oils. This technical similarity is confirmed by Linnell's use of support, paper laid down on panel, much as both Blake and Palmer employed in their oils. This small, intensely felt work, draws together Linnell's scrupulous observation of nature, his belief in the numinous quality of the British landscape and his relationship with Palmer at his most visionary moment.



FRANCIS DANBY 1793–1861

SUNSET ACROSS THE EXE, DEVON

Oil on paper, laid onto card
The original backing sheet inscribed in ink by
James Danby: 'Francis Danby. A.R.A.'
5½ × 7¾ inches · 142 × 197 mm
Painted c.1855

COLLECTIONS

By descent in the Danby family until about 1930;
With Andrew Wyld, London, by 1986,
Barbara & Ernest Kafka, by 1988;
Kafka sale, Sotheby's, 6 July 2022, lot 212;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

Francis Greenacre, *Francis Danby 1793–1861*,
exh. cat., Bristol (Bristol City Museum and Art
Gallery), 1988, pp.122–123

EXHIBITED

Bristol, City Museum and Art Gallery and
London, Tate Britain, *Francis Danby 1793–1861*,
1988–89, no.56

This exceptionally bold and fluid oil sketch was made by Francis Danby towards the end of his life and forms part of a group of highly charged studies Danby made whilst he was living in Exmouth on the Devon coast.

Born and trained in Ireland, Danby led a peripatetic life, first in Bristol, but from 1829 on the Continent, where he fled to escape his creditors. Danby was consistently regarded as one of the most significant and innovative landscape painters of his generation producing a sequence of visionary works which combined a fascination for extreme climactic events with a remarkable sensibility to naturalism. In 1824 he showed *Sunset at Sea after a Storm* at the Royal Academy, showing the raft of shipwrecked survivors in a desolate inky sea illuminated by a vivid red sunset, where it was acquired by the Academy's President, Sir Thomas Lawrence. In 1828 Danby showed *The Opening of the Sixth Seal* at the Royal Academy, an epic work showing a mass of figures cowering on an eerily lit rock beneath a blood red moon, where it was acquired by William Beckford. The painting was a critical and financial success, Danby being

awarded a premium of 200 guineas from the British Institution and receiving £300 for the copyright on top of the 500 guineas paid by Beckford. The painting even elicited the grudging respect of John Constable who described the painting as 'a grand but murky dream.'¹ Despite these successes Danby failed to be elected a full member of the Royal Academy in 1829, losing out by one vote to John Constable. Debt compelled Danby to spend the following decade on the Continent, eventually settling in Paris in 1836. He continued to produce a stream of ambitious historical landscapes which he sent to the various exhibiting societies in London.

In around 1855 Danby moved to Rill Cottage in Exmouth, situated above North Street it commanded sweeping views across the river Exe. Finally financially secure, thanks to a steady flow of commissions from dealers and collectors, Danby settled down to enjoy his life in Devon. One result was an exceptional group of small, intense plein air oil sketches of which the present example is one of the most compelling. Francis Greenacre described the present work as: 'perhaps the boldest and most immediate of



the oil sketches, this is a hasty, dramatic and personal record of an actual sunset.² Danby has worked rapidly on prepared paper applying bands of colour to suggest foreground, river with its sweep of red reflected sky, the western bank of the Exe and the vivid sunset above. These horizontals are interrupted by the vertical lines of a stand of trees created with rapid feathery brushstrokes of loaded paint. Danby has worked at speed to capture the impression of the vivid sunset, a sense of this speed is suggested by the drips of liquid paint which have run from the line of blue grey sky at the top of the sheet. It is possible that Danby recorded a view from the window of Rill Cottage, an exquisite upright sketch from the same group shows the corner of his drawing room with a similar tree line visible through the window.

The present oil, along with the best of Danby's oil sketches including *A Boat-building Shed* in the Gere Collection at the National Gallery, is mounted on a piece of card which has been inscribed 'Francis Danby A.R.A.' by Danby's son, James. Eric Adams stated that this group of oil sketches, along with other mementoes relating to the artist, including his photograph portrait, survived in the Danby family until about 1930 when they were dispersed.³



Francis Danby
View from the drawing room, Exmouth
 Oil on paper laid on card · 9¼ × 5½ inches · 247 × 142 mm · c.1855
 Private collection



NOTES

1. Ed. R. B. Beckett, *John Constable's Correspondence*, vol.VI, 1968, p.236.
2. Francis Greenacre, *Francis Danby*, exh. cat., Bristol (Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery), 1988, p.122.
3. Eric Adams, *Francis Danby: Varieties of Poetic Landscape*, New Haven and London, 1973, pp.178-179.

CORNELIUS VARLEY 1781–1873

A BIRCH TREE

Watercolour
13 × 9¼ inches · 330 × 247 mm
Signed, dated and inscribed: 'Birch, Cornelius
Varley, 1801 Norfolk'
Painted in 1801

COLLECTIONS

Davis & Langdale, New York, 1987;
Bill Blass (1922–2002), acquired from the above;
Sotheby's, The Bill Blass Collection, New York,
21–23 Oct, 2002;
W.M. Brady & Co.;
Lowell Libson Ltd;
Private collection, acquired from the above
2004, to 2022

LITERATURE

Lowell Libson, *Cornelius Varley: The Art of
Observation*, London, 2005, pp.66–67, no.4

EXHIBITED

London, Lowell Libson Ltd., *Cornelius Varley:
The Art of Observation*, 2005, no.4

This is one of the most beautiful tree studies made by Cornelius Varley. Varley received his early artistic education from his brother, John, who we know encouraged his pupils to study the component parts of landscape as he believed that it was only through intimate study would one be able to more fully understand nature and thus be able to reproduce it successfully. Another of John Varley's pupils, William Henry Hunt, recorded that he and his fellow students would: 'sit down before any common object – a cottage, garden rails, a mossy wall or an old port and endeavour to imitate them minutely a rareful mode of practice not then recognised as it has since become.' In this beautifully observed watercolour, Varley has singled out the trunk of a birch tree, faithfully recording the minutiae of a section of its bark. Varley leaves the remainder of the

sheet remarkably plain, simply washing in the foreground in rich green watercolour. In its intensity of vision, sparseness and powerful sense of design, this drawing points to Varley's important place as an innovator in nineteenth-century British landscape painting.

Cornelius Varley had been brought up from the age of twelve by his uncle Samuel Varley, a watch and instrument maker as well as an amateur scientist. For many years his interest in science and art ran in tandem, as his enquiring mind came to scrutinise all aspects of the natural world.¹

Varley seems to have been strongly influenced by Thomas Girtin's practice of sketching from nature in all weathers, having apparently seen him 'sitting out for hours in the rain to observe the effect of storms and clouds upon the atmosphere.' This remarkable drawing shows Varley's observational powers. Drawn en plein air on a trip he undertook to Gillingham Norfolk with his brother in 1801. The Varleys were stayed at Gillingham Hall with the Bacon-Schultz family; John had been teaching the daughters to sketch in London. Whilst there he was able: 'to sketch from Nature the ladies coming to sketch with [him] whenever they liked. This happy change was like a glorious holiday. The pure air The sense of liberty to ramble anywhere and to have the boundless works of creation open before [him].'² Taking full advantage of this freedom, Varley made this intense study of a birch tree. Rather than delineating the whole tree, Varley concentrates on the lower section, producing a minute record of the bark omitting the canopy or leaves. Varley eschews all the conventions of the picturesque, placing the tree at the centre of

the composition and capturing the mottled, knotted texture of its bark with scientific precision. Indeed the composition and approach to the drawing recalls botanical studies. Varley's scrutinising vision produces a surprisingly compelling portrait of a single birch. The sheet is further lifted by Varley's distinctive inscription, which floats away from the totem-like tree.

There is considerable contemporary evidence to suggest that informal studies such as this were exhibited by Varley in his lifetime. His aesthetically compelling watercolours combined careful observation with intensity of feeling in a manner which anticipates John Constable and the emerging strain of naturalism in early nineteenth-century Britain. Constable may have seen Varley's work at the first exhibition of the Society of Painters in Watercolour in 1805; two of his twelve exhibits that year were listed by him as sketches 'made on the spot.' In the second half of the twentieth century, his work became appreciated for its freshness and its role in pioneering a 'naturalistic' mode of landscape painting. The present sheet was owned by the notable fashion designer and collector Bill Blass.

NOTES

1. Jane Munro, *British Landscape Watercolours 1750–1850*, exh. cat., Cambridge (Fitzwilliam Museum), 1994, p.97.
2. *Exhibitions of Drawings and Watercolours by Cornelius Varley*, London, 1973, p.2.



JOHN SELL COTMAN 1782–1842

THE EAGLE TOWER, CAERNARVON CASTLE, NORTH WALES

Watercolour and pencil on paper
16¹³/₁₆ × 12⁵/₈ inches · 427 × 321mm
Signed, dated, and inscribed: 'JSC 1802 /
SWORD'

COLLECTIONS

Phillips, 8 October 1984, lot 90;
Sotheby's, 1 April 1993, lot 59;
Private collection London to 2021;
Bonham's, 8 December 2021, lot 57;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd

EXHIBITED

Probably London, Royal Academy, 1802, no.420
as 'Caernarvon Castle, North Wales'

This immensely atmospheric watercolour was painted by John Sell Cotman at the beginning of his career and shows his extraordinary mastery of the medium. One of two works Cotman exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1802, this sheet shows the Eagle Tower of Caernarvon Castle at night, illuminated by a fiery orange light. The brooding atmosphere of this highly worked watercolour directly reflects his admiration and absorption of the works of Thomas Girtin. This rare and important exhibition work ranks as one of the grandest and most beautifully preserved watercolours of Cotman's first great phase.

Born in Norwich, and like his contemporary J.M.W. Turner, the son of a barber, John Sell Cotman had little training before his move to London in 1798. The following year, again like Turner and Thomas Girtin before him, he joined Dr Monro's 'Academy' in the

Strand. Monro, a physician, had treated John Robert Cozens, as a result he had a large collection of Cozens's works, introducing a new generation of watercolourists to his deeply felt and emotional landscapes. Cozens's technical virtuosity also offered an important precedent for the young painters, showing the potential of watercolour as a medium. From 1799 a few of these younger painters formed themselves into a society for the study of landscape, calling themselves 'The Brothers' with Girtin at their head. 'The Brothers' met in the evening in each other's rooms, where the host would set the subject, usually a verse from the poets. They drew from seven till ten, when, according to the rule: 'all drawing shall cease, when simple fare shall be produced with Ale and Porter.' The members agreed that the subject of the evening should be: 'more particularly tending to Landscape.'



Paul Sandby Munn
Bedlam Furnace, Madeley Dale, Shropshire
Watercolour · 12³/₄ × 21¹/₂ inches · 325 × 548 mm · 1803
Tate, London (photo Tate)





We can trace the activities of the society in 1799 because a fragmentary minute book survives, it records the attendance of a number of artists including Louis Francia, Girtin and Paul Sandby Munn. The first evidence of Cotman's membership comes in the form of a sequence of drawings made by members in around 1801, the drawings of *An Ancient Castle* include works by Girtin, Munn and Cotman. In November 1801 Girtin left London for Paris and Cotman becomes the leading light in the society, regularly hosting the evening sessions.

This watercolour demonstrates what he learnt from being in close proximity to Girtin, Francia and Munn. The grand, vertical format; the sombre, almost monochrome palette, the richly worked watercolour surface and the highly atmospheric treatment of the subject matter all recall the three artists at their height. Technically the view could be described as a Girtinean exercise in Welsh topography. The view is the famous Eagle Tower shown from the East, in the foreground is the slipway down to the tidal Menai Strait where a boat is resting on the bank. But as in Girtin's greatest mature watercolours, any real topographical purpose has been overwhelmed by the sense of atmosphere exuded by the orange sky. Cotman has emulated not only Girtin's sombre palette but also his rich, textured surfaces, using thick areas of pigment to give a deep opacity, in the barrel on the left for example, and scratching out to articulate the team of horses pulling the cart in the middle distance. In palette and effect this watercolour also captures something of Louis Francia's greatest works, for example his *Parys Copper Mine, Anglesey, North Wales* which was painted in 1800 and now in the

Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

In Cotman's watercolour, as in Francia's depiction of *Parys Copper Mine* and Girtin's works, the monumental thirteenth-century fortification takes on a sinister quality, glowering over the diminutive figures working at its base. This points to the emotional potential of watercolour at this date. Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime* had articulated the powerful aesthetic of fear and dread, an aesthetic that was heightened by the unknown. Cotman uses his rich, layered washes to obscure the view beyond the tower, all but obliterating the town and the rest of the castle. The rich colouring and bright, furnace-like effect of light, recall Cotman's own encounters with Britain's new industrial sites. By 1802 Cotman was listed lodging with Paul Sandby Munn at 107 New Bond Street. Munn and Cotman made a tour of Wales in the same year, both using the same, rich, orangey palette to produce views of the Bedlam Furnace, Madely Dale, Shropshire. In the case of this watercolour the industry is only the normal trade of the Welsh town, shipping on the Menai Strait in the form of coal brigs.

That this is a major public statement by Cotman is demonstrated not only by his decision to submit it for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1802, but by the fact that he etched the same view in 1838 in his *Liber Studiorum*. Preserved in astonishingly fresh and rich condition, this watercolour is one of the greatest produced in his first, pioneering years in London. It demonstrates a technical virtuosity and emotional depth that made Cotman not only the equal of his contemporaries, particularly Girtin and Turner, but Girtin's true successor.

JOHN VARLEY 1778–1842

THE ALBION CHAPEL FROM LONDON WALL

Watercolour over pencil
15¼ × 12¾ inches · 387 × 324 mm
c.1815

COLLECTIONS

P. & D. Colnaghi, London;
Michael Ingram;
Ingram sale, Sotheby's, 8 December, 2005
lot 154 (£19,200, as Cornelius Varley);
W.S. Fine Art, London, by 2006;
Barbara & Ernest Kafka, New York, acquired
from the above;
Kafka sale, Sotheby's, 6 July 2022, lot 207;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

LITERATURE

Derek Clifford, *Collecting English Watercolours*,
London 1970, p.218

EXHIBITED

Winchester College, 1963;
London, W.S. Fine Art, *Watercolours and
Drawings*, 2006, no.28 (front cover of the
catalogue)



John Varley *The Albion Chapel and part of old London
Wall in Moorfields*
Watercolour · 7¼ × 9¼ inches · 185 × 236 mm · 1818
© The Trustees of the British Museum

This beautifully fluid watercolour was made by John Varley in around 1815, it shows the Scottish Presbyterian Albion chapel in the City of London. An unusually free sketch, this watercolour was assumed to be by Varley's more innovative younger brother, Cornelius. But the survival of a 'finished' watercolour by John and its similarity to other limpid studies from around 1815 confirm it to be one of the freshest and most engaging works by the elder of the two Varleys. Preserved in excellent condition, this rare watercolour sketch demonstrates how direct and compelling John Varley could be as a landscape painter.

Varley belonged to the generation of young landscape painters working at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who adopted watercolour as their principal medium for artistic and professional advancement. Varley was one of the founder members of the Society of Painters in Water Colours in 1804 and among its most prolific and respected exhibitors. He attended Dr Monro's informal academy in Adelphi Terrace and from 1802 to 1804 was a member of the Sketching Society. Throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century, Varley built up a flourishing practice as a teacher in watercolour; Peter DeWint, William Henry Hunt and Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding were all trained under his supervision. Despite giving so much time to teaching, Varley was also an extraordinary prolific painter. With a large family and little financial acumen, he was often short of ready money, and so it was not unusual for him to send more than forty exhibits at a time to the annual watercolour exhibitions. Varley's motto was 'go to nature for everything' and he encouraged his

followers to sketch outdoors. Varley himself was in the habit of working outdoors in London, particularly along the Thames, as Rudolph Ackerman noted in his 1809 *New Drawing Book*, Varley: 'passes many days in the summer and autumnal months, in making accurate studies of the boats, barges, punts, eel pots, fishing nets, anchors and other appendages used by fisherman upon the Thames.'

Whilst the present watercolour is not a Thames view, it does show Varley working en plein air in London. The view is taken on the street called London Wall looking west towards the Albion chapel. On the right of the view are the remains of an ancient brick wall and palisade, which were shortly to be replaced by the South elevation of Finsbury Circus. The domed structure in the distance is the Albion Chapel which was erected on the site of the old Bethlem Royal Hospital and completed in 1815. Drawn first in pencil on thick, wove paper, Varley has then used remarkably fluid washes of watercolour to capture the leafless tree silhouetted against the blue sky and the figures traversing London Wall. This fluency reveals why Varley was so highly regarded by his contemporaries. A more finished watercolour by Varley of the same subject survives in the British Museum giving a fascinating insight into his working practice. In contrast to the quiet naturalism of the present sheet, in the finished watercolour Varley has shifted the season, adding foliage to the tree, neatened the wooden palisade and added colourful, prosperous figures to the pavement.



JOHN CONSTABLE 1776–1837

A WOMAN READING

Pencil on laid paper with a fragmentary watermark for 1805
6 × 6⁷/₈ inches · 152 × 175 mm
Drawn in 1806

COLLECTIONS

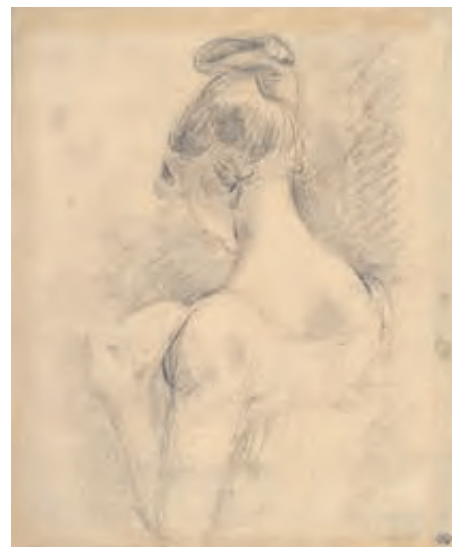
Hugh Constable (1868–1949) the artist's grandson;
Leggatt Brothers, 1899;
Sir Harry Baldwin (1863–1931);
Sir Robert Witt (1872–1952);
James Byam Shaw (1903–1992), a gift from the above in 1936;
Mrs J. Byam Shaw;
Agnew's, London;
Private collection, London to 2011;
Andrew Wyld, Wyld sale, Christie's, 10 July, 2012, lot 22;
Private collection, London to 2022

LITERATURE

Graham Reynolds, *The Early Paintings and Drawings of John Constable*, New Haven and London, 1996, no.06.181, p.97, pl.559

EXHIBITED

London, W/S Fine Art, Summer 2011, no.27



This charming, informal study of a woman reading was drawn by John Constable in 1806. During that year, he made a number of portraits and a series of intimate figure studies of his friends and relations at leisure. It fits into a group of similar studies of young women Constable made that year. Constable made frequent visits to the Cobbold, Hobson and Gubbins families and made portraits of members of the Harden and Lloyd families, any of whom may have provided the model for this sensitive study. The intimacy of the pose, the woman appears to be reclining, her feet drawn up and her elbow resting on a low surface, attentively reading, supporting her head in her right hand. That this drawing was probably made in the evening is suggested by the shaded background. Constable has worked rapidly to capture the sitter apparently unawares, starting with the gesture of the supporting hand, as a consequence Constable has made it slightly larger and out of proportion with the rest of the body.

The drawing may well depict one of Constable's three sisters. Only one, Martha, married (to a London cheese-monger named Daniel Whalley). He does not seem to have been particularly close to his eldest sister, Ann, who was eight years his senior, but Constable was close to his younger sister, Mary. She is shown in a vigorous head study of 1806 and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, with her dark hair, large eyes and pronounced, straight nose, she could well be

John Constable
Head of a young woman, possibly Emma Hobson
Pencil · 8⁷/₈ × 7⁷/₈ inches · 225 × 187 mm · 1806
musée du Louvre, DAG, Paris
Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Thierry Le Mage

the sitter in the present drawing. Mary was the only member of the family to address Constable in letters as 'Dearest Johnny', and it was Mary who was dispatched to keep him company in 1812 in his London lodgings in Charlotte Street. 1806 saw Constable undertake a series of portrait commissions, perhaps conscious of the need to broaden the scope of his artistic practice. Constable made a portrait of the daughters of William and Anne Mason, which shows them engaged in a series of genteel leisure activities, including sewing and reading. He also travelled to the Lake District in September and October where he made a series of informal sketches of his travelling companions reading, playing musical instruments or in quiet repose. Constable's figure drawings of 1806 are unique in his output as an artist, they seem to reflect the unusually busy and social year. He spent time earlier in 1806 with the Cobbolds of Ipswich, then with his uncle, aunt and cousins the Gubbins at Epsom, and for over a fortnight in June and July with a building contractor named William Hobson and his family at Markfield House, Tottenham. Two intact sketchbooks survive from his Epsom stay, the present sheet is almost certainly from a larger, dismembered sketchbook. Scholars have long pondered of the significance of this rare and important body of figure studies in Constable's oeuvre. One answer was his anxiety to forge a practice as a portrait painter. But as Anne Lyles has recently observed: 'they, also, however, seem to show signs of sheer pleasure in recording his human surroundings.' Particularly tenderly observed, the present drawing gives a rare and enchanting view of an educated middle-class woman at leisure in the age of Jane Austen.



SIR EDWARD JOHN POYNTER BT 1836–1919

ALFRED BALDWIN

Oil on unlined canvas, stamped 'Wood & Co
190 Brompton Road London SW'
26 × 21¼ inches · 665 × 54 mm
Signed with monogram and dated 1878
centre right

Original frame carved and gilded by William A.
Smith, trade label to reverse

COLLECTIONS

Alfred Baldwin (1841–1908);
Stanley Baldwin, 1st Earl Baldwin of Bewdley
(1867–1947), son of the above;
Oliver Baldwin, 2nd Earl Baldwin of Bewdley
(1899–1858), son of the above;
Arthur Baldwin, 3rd Earl Baldwin of Bewdley
(1904–1976), brother of the above;
Edward Baldwin, 4th Earl Baldwin of Bewdley
(1938–2021), son of the above;
Baldwin sale, Sotheby's, 3 July 2022, lot 144;
Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, 1879, no.199 (as *Alfred
Baldwin, Esq*)

This striking portrait was exhibited at
the Royal Academy in 1879 when Edward
Poynter was at the peak of his career as
a painter. The sitter, Alfred Baldwin, was
Poynter's brother-in-law and the father of
the future Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin.
Poynter and Baldwin were each married to
daughters of George Browne Macdonald
and formed part of a remarkable family
circle; the two elder Macdonald sisters were
married to John Lockwood Kipling, father
of Rudyard Kipling, and to Sir Edward Coley
Burne-Jones. Through marriage this brought
together two of the most prominent artists
of the late nineteenth century (Poynter and
Burne-Jones), a pioneering designer and
art educator (Kipling) and a major manu-
facturer and politician (Baldwin). Poynter's
portrait shows Baldwin as a prosperous late
Victorian industrialist; with luxuriant beard,



Titian Giacomo Doria
Oil on canvas · 45½ × 38½ inches · 1155 × 977 mm
1530–5
© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford,
Purchased in memory of Professor Francis Haskell

dark frock coat, watch chain and gold pince
nez, albeit a nineteenth-century plutocrat
reimagined as a sixteenth-century Venetian
senator. Poynter's portrait in its characteri-
sation, lush painterliness and palette recalls
the portraiture of Titian, Tintoretto and
Veronese, whilst the acid green background
suggests Poynter's interest in Florentine
models such as Bronzino and Rosso
di Fiorentino.

Edward Poynter was born and trained
in Paris, first in the atelier of Charles
Gleyre, before enrolling in the *École des
Beaux-Arts*. Poynter's years in Paris with
fellow students James McNeill Whistler,
George Du Maurier's Thomas Lamont and
Thomas Armstrong was later celebrated
in Du Maurier's best-selling novel *Trilby*
(1894). Poynter's Continental training
contributed to his success with both
exhibition machines and decorative work.
In 1868 Poynter travelled to Venice to
study Venetian mosaics in preparation for
an ambitious multifigured hemicycle in
mosaic which he had been commissioned
to complete for the new lecture theatre at
the South Kensington Museum, London. In
1871 Poynter was appointed the first Slade
Professor at University College, London,
during his five-year tenure he was responsi-
ble for introducing the principles of French
art education into the English system. The
1870s was Poynter's most prolific decade, he
completed a sequence of powerful exhibi-
tion works resulting in his election as a
Royal Academician in 1876.

On 9 August 1866 the double wedding
took place at St Peter's, Wolverhampton of
the sisters Agnes and Louisa Macdonald
to Poynter and Alfred Baldwin. Louisa
Baldwin was the only one of her sisters





Alphonse Legros
Portrait of Sir Edward John Poynter
Etching 10 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 6 $\frac{1}{16}$ inches · 256 × 170 mm · 1877
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1917

not to marry an artist, although she had modelled for Burne-Jones in her youth. By contrast Baldwin was a successful iron master, running the family forge at Wilden in Worcestershire. Responsible for a rapid growth of the firm, Baldwin established himself as a liberal employer and hugely successful businessman. The closeness of Louisa and Agnes Macdonald almost certainly explains the present portrait, commissioned by Baldwin in 1878.

Poynter's carefully observed portrait communicates something of the self-assurance of the successful 37-year-old Baldwin. Dramatically lit, so half the face appears in shadow, Poynter places Baldwin close to the picture plane and eliminated all extraneous detail. This contrasts with many of Poynter's most celebrated paintings of the period, many of which revelled in the details of fashionable aesthetic interiors. One answer for this departure may have been Baldwin himself, the successful industrialist, with his thick beard and dark clothes may have reminded Poynter of sixteenth-century Venetian portraiture. Whilst Poynter does not explicitly imitate a specific model, the visual components were surely arranged to suggest the depiction of some Renaissance merchant? Although finely worked and consistent with Poynter's French academic training, there are passages of fluid paint and rich brushstrokes, suggesting Poynter was conscious of emulating Venetian technique. The painting is housed in the original grand, carved and gilt frame which evokes sixteenth-century Florentine examples. The frame retains its original trade label identifying it as the work of William A. Smith of 14 Charles Street. Smith was much patronised by leading painters in the

1870s, Holman Hunt described the business as possibly the best gilder and carvers in London, a considerable recommendation at a time when most frames were made using gesso.

This imposing portrait is therefore both a remarkable depiction of a Victorian industrialist and a deeply personal painting celebrating a singular bond between artist and sitter. Poynter and Baldwin were at the heart of one of the most remarkable family groups of nineteenth-century Britain. Preserved in excellent condition, unlined and in its original frame, this portrait has remaining in the Baldwin family until now.

EDWARD ARMITAGE 1817–1896

THE BOTTOM OF THE RAVINE AT INKERMAN

Black and coloured chalks on canvas
30 × 48 inches · 760 × 1220 mm
Signed and inscribed 'E Armitage/Inkermann'
(lower right)

COLLECTIONS

Lawrence's Auctioneers, Crewkerne, 20 October
1988;
Julian Hartnoll, London, 1989;
Isabel Goldsmith;
Goldsmith sale, Christie's, 14 July 2022, lot 71

LITERATURE

J.R. Armitage, *Edward Armitage RA – Battles in
the Victorian Art World*, Market Harborough,
2017, p.75

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, 1856, no.880 (*The
bottom of the ravine at Inkermann – from a
sketch taken on the spot, four months after the
battle*);
Munich, Neue Pinakothek, and Madrid, Prado,
British Council Visual Arts Dept, *Victorian
Painting*, 1993

[I]t speaks to us in a more dreadful
whisper of the horrors of war than
all the peace speeches ever made.

The Athenaeum, May 24th 1856, p.655

This raw, uncompromising drawing of decomposing corpses was made by Edward Armitage in March 1855 following a visit to the site of the Battle of Inkermann. One of the bloodiest engagements of the Crimea War, the Battle of Inkermann, which had been fought in November 1854, became celebrated for the tenacity of Anglo-French troops in the face of a far larger Russian force; despite being outnumbered, the allies held their ground, paving the way for the Siege of Sevastopol and the eventual Russian defeat. Edward Armitage, a successful young historical painter, was sponsored by the art dealer Ernest Gambart to travel to the Crimea in late 1854, shortly after news of the battle had arrived in London. Gambart was a hugely entrepreneurial dealer and print publisher, he commissioned Armitage to produce a series of grand canvases celebrating battles in the war, which he planned to reproduce and sell as prints. In March 1856 Armitage's two large-scale battle paintings, *The Battle of Inkermann* and *The Charge of the Heavy Brigade* were shown at Gambart's French Gallery, 121 Pall Mall. In the same year, Armitage exhibited this extraordinary, large-scale drawing at the Royal Academy. In contrast to Armitage's set-piece battle scenes, this exceptional work was recognised by contemporaries as chillingly communicating the realities of war. As the anonymous reviewer in *The*



Athenaeum noted: 'it speaks to us in a more dreadful whisper of the horrors of war than all the peace speeches ever made.'

Armitage was unusual amongst his British contemporaries. Born into a wealthy family, his father was an ironmaster from Leeds, Armitage was trained in Paris, not at the Royal Academy in London. In 1837 he enrolled at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, joining the atelier of Paul Delaroche. Armitage was one of the four students selected to assist Delaroche in executing his frescos, in the Palais des Beaux-Arts. The vast, multi-figured frieze was commissioned by the architect Félix Duban to decorate the amphitheatre of the *École des Beaux-Arts*. The painting itself comprises portraits of seventy-five great artists of all ages in conversation, with Phidias, Ictinus and Apelles enthroned at the centre flanked by the muses, Armitage reputedly modelled for the head of Masaccio. Through Delaroche, Armitage received a rigorous training, which privileged draughtsmanship and high technical finish.

Throughout the 1840s Armitage had a series of exhibition triumphs. In 1843 his cartoon, *Julius Caesar's First Invasion of Britain*, secured one of the three first-prize

premiums of £300 in the competition to decorate the new houses of parliament in Westminster. His cartoon for *The Spirit of Religion* won the premium of £200 in 1845 and he announced himself as a major battle painter in 1847 with *The Battle of Meanee*. Exhibited at Westminster Hall in 1847 the large, multi-figured composition caused a sensation and was awarded a premium of £500. Queen Victoria visited the exhibition purchasing the painting for £400, it remains in the Royal Collection.

The success of such an ambitious and complex work as *The Battle of Meanee* made him the obvious choice for Gambart to send to the Crimea. The war had begun in 1853 and allied forces had landed on the Crimean Peninsula in September 1854, winning the Battle of Alma shortly afterwards. The Russian counterattack in October saw the allies defeated at the Battle of Balaclava, but a second Russian counterattack at Inkerman was repulsed. At no time during the battle did any unit larger than a regiment act against the enemy. Many soldiers resorted to the bayonet, stones and fists when the heavy rain touched their cartridge powder. The courage and tenacity of the British rank and file meant that Inkerman was almost



Paul Delaroche *St Veronica*
Oil on panel · 11 × 19¼ inches · 280 × 490 mm · 1855
Paris, musée du Louvre
Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) /
René-Gabriel Ojeda



immediately known as the 'Soldiers' Battle'.¹

We know from the evidence of a series of drawings that Armitage had arrived at Balaclava by 7 January 1855. His drawings hint at the structural problems the British were facing in the harsh Crimean winter, particularly the lack of adequate transport; one drawing shows soldiers trudging through the mud carrying vital supplies. He made a series of studies of the sutler's camp and the army cemetery at Cathcart's Hill. The *Illustrated London News* published Armitage's portraits of the British commanders Lord Raglan and Rear Admiral Sir Edward Lyons along with the French divisional commander Pierre Bosquet.² The *Art Journal* recorded Armitage's return to Britain by October 1855 when it noted that he was preparing 'two large pictures of the battles of Inkermann and Balaklava.' The notice added: 'he has recently returned from

the Crimea with a number of sketches of the scenery amid which those glorious struggles took place, and of portraits of many of the most distinguished actors. But Inkermann and Balaklava, though of undying interest, have since been absorbed in that which attached to the last tremendous conflict on the shattered bulwarks of Sebastopol. We shall not be surprised to see this illustrated on the walls of the Academy next year; for our artists, like our soldiers, have rushed into the thickest of the fight to pursue their art, which in such cases can scarcely be called 'a peaceful art.'³

Armitage did indeed produce the two celebratory canvases for Gambart, but chose something far more ruminative and equivocal for the walls of the Academy, the present study of corpses which he gave the title 'The Bottom of the Ravine at Inkermann'. The Battle of Inkerman resulted in some 15,000



Roger Fenton *The Ruins of Inkerman* May 1855
Albumen print · 8 × 10¹/₈ inches · 202 × 258 mm (image)
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



casualties and several thousand decaying corpses remained on Inkerman ridge for the duration of the war.⁴ When the present work was shown at the Royal Academy it is specifically listed as having been made 'from a sketch taken on the spot, four months after the battle.' Armitage shows fallen soldiers, their nationalities unknown, lying amidst a thicket, the ground punctuated by little clumps of white snowdrops and yellow crocuses, the first spring flowers. The ground is littered with the detritus of battle: a Russian cap, the bolt of a rifle and in the foreground the distinctive regimental badge of the Grenadier Guards. Above this scene of death, Armitage has included a pair of white butterflies, suggestive of the soul's flight. Richly worked in black chalk on a finely woven unprepared canvas, Armitage has confined colour to small, localised areas: the March flowers in yellow and white, bluey grey of a ragged greatcoat and faded red of a pair of trousers.

In spirit and approach, this grand drawing could not be further from the highly academic, celebratory works produced for Ernest Gambart. The deliberate anonymity of the soldiers – they could be fallen allied troops or equally Russian – and the sense of nature reclaiming the battlefield points to an undercurrent of disquiet at the course of the war and its human cost; this was how contemporaries read the work. The Crimean War was the first conflict to be reported extensively by war correspondents, the first to be photographed and the first to be covered extensively in the illustrated London papers. As the Siege of Sevastopol dragged on through 1855, the welfare of soldiers, their hygiene, health and conditions became a matter of public debate. By May 1856, when Armitage's drawing was shown at the Royal Academy, public opinion in Britain was outraged at the logistical and command failures of the war; newspapers demanded drastic reforms, and

parliamentary investigations demonstrated the multiple failures of the army. As such, Armitage's *Ravine at Inkerman*, celebrates the sacrifice of life on all sides and points hauntingly to the human cost of the conflict. Technically it owes much to Armitage's training with Delaroche, compositionally it may owe something to Delaroche's *Saint Veronique* now in the Louvre, which had been completed in 1855. The expertly foreshortened corpses recall academic nudes, whilst the level of putrefaction and decay reminds the viewer that these were once vigorous young men. Although completed in 1856 Armitage's chilling depiction of corpses in the Crimea has renewed relevance for us today, as that region is once again plunged into conflict.

NOTES

1. Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, Michigan, 1984, p.46.
2. Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, Michigan, 1984, p.108.
3. *The Art Journal*, vol.17, October 1855, p.286.
4. Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, Michigan, 1984, p.46.

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A Frieze Designed for Edward Knight
see page 40



