

A Game of Dice

Thomas Rowlandson



Description

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827)
A Game of Dice

Signed lower centre: Rowlandson
Pen and brown and grey ink and watercolour
Oval 32.4 by 32 cm., 12 ¾ by 12 ½ in,

Provenance:

Ray Livingston Murphy (1923-1953), his Estate sale, Christie's, 19th November 1985, lot 104;
Anonymous sale, Christie's, 9th April 1991, lot 76a;
By descent to the present owner

Gambling subjects were close to Rowlandson's heart and he is known to have frittered away most of his wealth on gambling and especially the dice game Hazard. He would frequently gamble all night losing huge sums (see Matthew and James Payne, *Regarding Thomas Rowlandson*, 2010, pp. 170-171).

Rowlandson seems to have used circular compositions mainly for sporting and gambling subjects and they may have been intended for the decoration of screens (for examples, see John Hayes, *Rowlandson Watercolours and Drawings*, 1972, nos. 41 and 126 and Lowell Libson, *op. cit.*, no.25).

It has been suggested that the current drawings were painted for the Prince Regent to go on a screen at Brighton Pavillion which was being refurbished by the architect John Nash at the time. Rowlandson is said to have produced a set of screen decorations for the Prince Regent (see A.P. Oppé, *Thomas Rowlandson: His Drawings and Water-Colours*, 1923, p.21). Byron is also said to have commissioned four similar drawings from Rowlandson depicting the sports of England (see Martin Hardie, *Water-Colour Painting in Britain*, vol. I, 1966, p.213).