An Execution outside Newgate Prison, London

Thomas Rowlandson

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Description

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827)
An Execution outside Newgate Prison, London

Pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil
18.3 by 26.8 cm., 7 by 10 ½ in.

Provenance:
Anonymous sale, Christie's, 3rd October 2001, lot 391;
Private Collection until 2018

Rowlandson has depicted the huge crowds that filled every available vantage point on execution day, even climbing up the sides of buildings and onto the nearby roofs. Street sellers can be seen in the foreground, plying goods to the watching crowds.

The austere mass of Newgate prison, visible behind the crowds of people, was built by George Dance the Younger. It was begun, on the site of an earlier prison, in 1770, but was badly damaged by fire during the Gordon Riots in 1780 and so extensively rebuilt and completed in 1782. On its completion, London's gallows were moved from Tyburn to Newgate and every Monday morning large crowds would assemble outside.

Another view of the same subject by Rowlandson is in the London Museum with another recorded in the collection of Desmond Coke.

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