

The Poorhouse at Hadley

Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A.



Description

Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A. (1775-1851)
The Poorhouse at Hadley, Hertfordshire

Watercolour over pencil
24.5 by 26.9 cm., 9 ½ by 10 ½ in.

Provenance:

Lady Lucas;
Mrs F.L. Evans;
With Colnaghi's, London, 1951;
Private Collection since 2014

The present watercolour, which dates from circa 1794, is characteristic of Turner's early work with his careful use of line and restricted colour palette. His early training as an architectural draughtsman and interest in topographical accuracy is evident. The influence of Canaletto's work is also still in evidence here, in the slightly broken, dashed effect of line.

The village of Hadley or Monken Hadley lies just to the north of London, in the borough of Barnet. It was in the county of Middlesex until 1889, when its borders were redrawn and it became part of Hertfordshire. In 1762 Prudence West set up a local branch of Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital at Hadley, housing forty children in what was locally known as Mr Warboy's House. Between 1759 and 1773, there were five branch hospitals established around the country at Shrewsbury, Hadley, Ackworth, Chester and Westerham. The Hadley Foundling Hospital only remained open until 1768, when the parish took control of it and turned it into the local poorhouse. Until this point, care of the poor had been basic with an overseer charged with looking after those in need. However, he was allowed to take any profits, so they spent as little as possible. When the parish took over the poorhouse conditions improved for the residents, until the end of the Napoleonic Wars led to a rise in the number of residents and a deliberate change in policy to make conditions as unpleasant as possible, in order to reduce numbers. In 1834 the Poor Law Act led to the closing of local poorhouses like the one at Hadley.

Turner entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1789, at the age of 14 and exhibited his first work there the following year. He exhibited his first oil at the Royal Academy in 1796, was elected Associate of the Academy in 1799 and Academician in 1802. In about 1793 he began to attend Dr Thomas Monro's informal Academy at 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, working alongside Thomas Girtin (1775-1802) and other young artists, copying work by other, more established artists including John Robert Cozens (1752-1797) and Edward Dayes (1763-1804). In November 1798, Turner and Girtin apparently told the artist and diarist Joseph Farington (1747-1821), that 'they had been employed by Dr Monro 3 years to draw at his house in the evenings. They went at 6 and staid til Ten.' (Diary entry 12 November 1798, eds. Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. III, 1979, p. 1090).

Dr Monro (1759-1833) (see no.5) was part of a dynasty of doctors who ran Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals and maintained an extensive private practice. His methods and views were regarded, even at the time, as 'wanting in humanity.' However, his connoisseurship of art and interest in and support of young artists was well-known. His father, Dr John Monro, lived briefly in Hadley after his retirement and Thomas's brother James was also subsequently a resident. Dr Monro apparently had a private as...