The Tomb of John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall and Blanche de la Tour, Chapel of St Edmund, Westminster Abbey, London

Sold

Thomas Shotter Boys



REF: 2739

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Description

Thomas Shotter Boys (1803-1874)
The Tomb of John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall, Chapel of St Edmund, Westminster Abbey, London

Extensively inscribed and signed and dated centre right: Thos Boys 18..
Watercolour
34.3 by 27.4 cm., 13 ½ by 10 ¾ in.

Provenance:
Anonymous sale, Christie's, 20th November 1979, lot 183 where bought by the present owner

Boys' reputation largely rests on his carefully drawn, detailed, architectural subjects, which were widely disseminated through lithographs, as well as watercolours. It is interesting to note that during the summer of 1825, Boys friends, and fellow artists, Bonington and Delacroix were given permission by the Keeper of Westminster Abbey (the artist William Westall) to study and draw the monuments and sculptures in the Abbey. Given Boys' relationship with the artists, especially with Bonington, Boys would surely have seen the resulting sketches, which perhaps inspired Boys to undertake his own exploration of the monuments of the Abbey, following his return to England in 1837.

There is a further watercolour depicting The Chapel of Edward the Confessor, Westminster Abbey: showing the Shrine of Edward the Confessor, the Tomb and Chantry of Henry V and the Tomb of Henry III, builder of this part of the Abbey, which was exhibited at the NWCS in 1850.

John of Eltham (1316-1337) was the second son of Edward II (1284-1327) and Queen Isabella of France. He took his surname from Eltham manor, Kent where he was born. In 1328, he was created Earl of Cornwall by his elder brother, Edward III who had inherited the throne on the death of their father the previous year. The brothers appear to have been close with John serving as Regent when his brother was abroad. He died whilst defending the northern border against the Scots, possibly of a fever, and was buried in Westminster Abbey on 13th January 1337. Edward III ordered 900 masses to be said for John's soul and commissioned a white alabaster monument for John in St Edmund's chapel. The angels at his head are ready to bear his soul to heaven and the lion at his feet, symbolises strength and courage. Around the sides of the tomb are small figures of past kings and queens, mourning John's death. Originally the tomb had an elaborate canopy over it, however, it was broken in the 1770s and removed. The edge of the small tomb which can be seen in the present watercolour is for William of Windsor and Blanche, Edward III's infant children. Edward himself is buried in the chapel of St Edward the Confessor, just to the north of John's tomb and his marble tomb with gilt bronze effigy and tester can just be seen in the background of this work.

In 1842, Boys depicted the North Front of Westminster Abbey and Hospital, which was reproduced at plate 7 in his Original Views of London as It is.

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