View of Borrowdale

John Constable

Sold



REF: 2901

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Description

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John Constable, R.A. (1776-1837)
A view of Borrowdale, recto; with a study of four Cumbrian children, verso

Watercolour over pencil
13.3 by 18.4 cm., 5 ¼ by 7 ¼ in.

Provenance:
Clifford Constable;
Isabel Constable;
P.S. Clayton;
Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 16 November 1962, lot 119, bt Agnew's;
With Thomas Agnew, where bought February 1963;
By descent to the present owner

Literature:
Charles Rhyne, 'Constable Drawings and Watercolours in the Collections of Mr & Mrs Paul Mellon and the Yale Center for British Art: Part 1. Authentic Works', Master Drawings, No, 2, Summer 1981, p. 129, under no. 14 for a listing of the watercolour verso;
Graham Reynolds, The Early Paintings and Drawings of John Constable, 1996, Vol. Text, p, 106, no 06.242, p. 106; Vol. Plates, pl. 617, ill., recto: Vol. Text, p. no. 108, no. 06.260; vol. Plates, pl. 632, ill. verso

Exhibited:
London, Thomas Agnew and Sons, 90th Annual Exhibition of Water-Colours and Drawings, 21st January to 2nd March 1963, no. 24

Constable spent just under two months between September and October 1806, in the Lake District. The trip was probably financed by his maternal uncle David Watts (1754-1816), who owned a house on Lake Windemere and is one of only a few 'sketching tours' in the traditional sense that Constable undertook.

Constable's visit was probably inspired by his early patron Sir George Beaumont (1753-1827) and fellow artist Joseph Farington (1747-1821), both of whom had been regular visitors since the 1770s. Constable would have been familiar with Farington's Views of the Lakes &c in Cumberland and Westmorland, published in 1785, following his four year stay in Keswick between 1776 and 1780. Furthermore Constable would have known Girtin's watercolours of the Lake District, worked up from Beaumont's own studies. Beaumont was a keen supporter of Girtin and not only owned around thirty watercolours by the artist, but was also an associate member of Girtin's sketching club and he actively encouraged Constable to study Girtin's work, in addition to the Old Masters such as Claude and Poussin. An inscription on the verso of a similar watercolour in the V&A confirms some of Constable's main influences at this point, 'fine cloudy day tone very mellow like - the mildest of/Gaspar Poussin and Sir GB'.

The challenging and unfamiliar landscapes that Constable explored in the Lake District were in stark contrast to that of his native East Anglia and required Constable to become more experimental in order to capture both the landscape and the dramatic effects of light and shadow and the constantly changing atmospheric effects on the peaks. Ian Fleming-Williams notes: 'During this tour, greatly stimulated by the Lake scenery, Constable appears to have experienced within himself powerful and still deeper feelings about landscape and, gradually, through a process of stylistic blending and distillation, to have discovered ways of expressing these sensations' (Ian Fleming-Williams, Constable and his Drawings, London, 1990, p. 77).His answer, as is clearly evidenced in the present watercolour was by reducing his palette, working with a greater tonal vari...

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