Study of the head of an Indian Elephant

Robert Hills

Sold



REF: 2649

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Description

Guy Peppiatt Fine Art Ltd.
Riverwide House, 6 Mason's Yard, Duke St. St. James's, London, SW1Y 6BU
T: 020 7930 3839 M: 07956 968 284 E: guy@peppiattfineart.co.uk www.peppiattfineart.co.uk

Robert Hills O.W.S. (1769-1844)
Study of the head of an Indian Elephant

Watercolour over traces of pencil
31.8 by 27.2 cm., 12 ½ by 10 ¾ in. (Image size)

Provenance:
With P & D Colnaghi, London
Barbara and Ernest Kafka

The first elephant to arrive in England was an African elephant sent by King Louis IX of France to his cousin Henry III in 1255 and was housed in the Tower of London menagerie, which had been founded in 1235 by the king, when he was given three leopards by the Holy Roman Emperor. With the formation of the East India Company and the growth of India's importance to Britain, Indian elephants began to periodically arrive in the country and were housed either in one of the various menageries or toured around the country as an attraction. At least 11 elephants arrived during the reigns of Queen Ann, George I and George II, whilst Queen Charlotte owned at least 6 elephants, which she kept at Buckingham House.

London's Zoological Society was founded in 1826 by Sir Stamford Raffles and was initially only open to fellows, for research and not the wider public. In 1831, the animals from the menagerie at the Tower of London were transferred to the zoo and in 1847 the zoo opened to the public. The first elephant to arrive was an Asiatic elephant called 'Jack' who the Society purchased in May 1831 from a Captain Smith. He lived in Decimus Burton's thatched elephant house, until his death in 1847.

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