

Ruins of the Savoy Palace, London

Thomas Girtin

Sold



Description

Thomas Girtin (1775-1802)
Ruins of the Savoy Palace, London

Signed on reverse of old backing: Savoy Prison/T Girtin
watercolour over traces of pencil
21.1 by 28.8 cm., 8 ¼ by 11 ¼ in.

Provenance:
Sir Hickman Bacon, Bart.;
With Thos. Agnew and Sons, Manchester;
Private Collection, Netherlands

Literature:

T. Girtin and D. Loshak, *The Art of Thomas Girtin*, 1954, no. 134, ii

This shows the ruins of the old Savoy Palace on the site of what is now the Savoy Hotel. Beyond is a view of the Thames and Westminster Bridge. It dates from 1795-96 is one of a group of views of the ruins which Girtin drew as a young man no doubt attracted by their picturesque character. Another view of the ruins is in the Ashmolean Museum (see Greg Smith, *Thomas Girtin: The Art of Watercolour*, 2002, no.67, p.92) and a pencil drawing is in the Yale Center for British Art. Girtin and Loshak (op. cit.) note that Turner also drew the same view but without the dog (with the Palser Gallery, circa 1920) which suggests that both drawings were executed at the same time. Turner was brought up in Covent Garden so would have known the ruins well.

Originally destroyed by a mob during the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, John of Gaunt's Savoy Palace was converted into a hospital for the poor by Henry VII in 1512. Although it was the first in the country to have permanent medical staff, the hospital closed in 1702 and the buildings fell into ruin. The remains were swept away during the building of Waterloo Bridge in the early 19th century. The only structure left today is the Savoy Chapel, off the Strand which was a side chapel of the hospital that once hosted a German Lutheran congregation.