A Limekiln at Briton Ferry, South Wales - Moonlight

Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A.

Sold



REF: 1201

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Description

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Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A. (1775-1851)
A Limekiln at Briton Ferry, South Wales - Moonlight

Signed lower right
Watercolour over traces of pencil
19.5 by 27.3 cm., 7 ½ by 10 ¾ in.

Provenance:
Anonymous sale, Christie's, 23rd April 1844, lot 81, bt. Murray;
John Murray III (1808-1892);
By descent to the present owner

This recently rediscovered watercolour by Turner was bought at auction in 1844 and has been in the John Murray collection ever since. Turner visited the area on his tour of South Wales in the summer of 1795 and this studio work is likely to date from later the same year. It was drawn from what was once a small promontory on the western bank of the River Neath looking towards Briton Ferry with the moon rising above the slopes of the Briton Ferry Wood above the village, looking beyond towards the larger hill of Mynydd-y-Gaer in the distance. The area is now much changed with the M4 and A48 bridges now dominating the landscape. A pencil sketchbook of the limekiln is in Turner's South Wales sketchbook in the Turner Bequest, Tate Gallery (TBXXVI, D00566) as well as other views of Briton Ferry and the area.
Turner appears to be painting a corona or aureole around the Moon which is quite often seen when the Moon is hidden, partially or fully, by cloud. The water droplets in the clouds cause diffraction effects and sometimes coloured rings of light.
We are grateful to Eric Shanes and Mike Frost of the British Astronomical Association for their comments on the watercolour.

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