Old Browne of Bodmin in Cornwall receiving his Rents

Thomas Rowlandson

Sold



REF: 2887

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Description

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Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827)
Old Browne of Bodmin in Cornwall receiving his Rents

Inscribed with title lower left and lower right:: Sketchd 1779 -
Pen and grey ink and washes on laid paper with original washline mount
Sheet 17.2 by 12.8 cm., 6 3/4 by 5 in.

Rowlandson is well known as a frequent visitor to Cornwall and regularly stayed with his close friend and patron, the London banker, Mathew Michell (1751-1818). Michell inherited his Cornish seat, Hengar House, St Tudy from his cousin in 1786. The two friends undertook several tours together including to the Low Countries and North Germany (1791-2) and regular trips throughout the West Country. Rowlandson published A series of Views in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset &c, 1805 and Views of Cornwall, 1812.

It has always been thought that Rowlandson first visited Cornwall with Michell, however, this drawing, which is dated 1779, predates Michell's inheritance by seven years. So whether the artist undertook an earlier visit to Cornwall, or whether Rowlandson, as he was often asked to do, dated the drawing at some later point and got the date wrong, something he also often did is uncertain. As Richard Baum states, 'Rowlandson was at times asked to sign and dated drawings long after their original inception…either his memory proved fallible or that he was tempted to increase the value of a drawing by giving a false date seems certain. Mr Oppé testifies that he has seen obviously authentic dates with were ten years earlier than the watermark'. (Richard Baum, 'A Rowlandson Chronology', The Art Bulletin, vol. 20, no 3, September 1938, p. 238).

The present lively study with its restricted palette is typical of the satirical sketches Rowlandson produced during the early decades of his career. It is possible to see both the influence of John Hamilton Mortimer and the artist's love of rococo line, especially evident in the lightly sketched in objects in the background, the clock and mirror. These details also serve to show the disparity between the wealth of Old Browne and poverty of his tenant.

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