Giralda, Seville

David Roberts R.A.

Sold

REF: 996

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Description

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David Roberts, R.A. (1790-1864)
The Giralda, Seville

Watercolour over pencil heightened with bodycolour on grey paper
35 by 24.5 cm., 13 ¾ by 9 ¾ in.

Provenance:
Anonymous sale, Sotheby's 3rd April 1996, lot 195;
With Spinks, London;
Private collection, London, until 2011

Roberts arrived in Seville in May 1833 and stayed until September when an outbreak of cholera caused him to leave. He was impressed by the city. He wrote to his friend D.R. Hay on 4th May: `[I] found myself on the following morning in fair Seville, which far exceeds my most sanguine expectations….. The cathedral ….. is one of the most picturesque and magnificent structures in the world. To see the Moorish tower alone is worth a journey from London.' This was a favourite view of Roberts's - a large oil taken from this viewpoint is in the collection of Downside school (see Helen Guiterman and Briony Llewellyn, David Roberts, exhibition catalogue, 1986, no.104, ill. P.46).
The Giralda tower in Seville was a former minaret, originally built in 1198. It is said that when the Christians reconquered Seville from the Moors in 1248, they did not have the heart to destroy the minaret because it was so beautiful. It was converted into a bell tower in 1568 with an additional bell enclosure and statue added to the top for the new cathedral that had begun construction in the previous century. Beyond the tower and cathedral, across the Plaza del Triunfo, the white walls of the Alcazar can be seen. Originally a Moorish fort, it was a Royal Palace and the upper levels are still used by the royal family as their official Seville residence.

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