A View of Jaffa

David Roberts R.A.

Sold



REF: 2977

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Description

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David Roberts R.A. (1796-1864)
A View of Jaffa

Signed, dated and inscribed, lower left: Jaffa March 26th/1839/David Roberts 1839
Pencil and watercolour heightened with bodycolour on blue paper
24 by 34.2 cm., 9 ½ by 13 ½ in.

Provenance:
Anonymous sale; Christie's, London, 17 June 1969, lot 167, bt. Manning Gallery for 420 gns;
Anonymous sale; Christie's, London, 15 June 1982, lot 139;
With Mathaf Gallery, London;
Anonymous sale; Christie's, London, 2 April 1996, lot 93;
Private Collection until 2024

Engraved:
By L. Haghe, as a lithograph, 1843, for D. Roberts, The Holy Land, 1842-49, vol. II, pl. 62

During the 19th Century the rise of popularity in travel books encouraged a fascination with regions traditionally thought to be too far away, or too difficult for the majority to visit.
Roberts had already found success following his year long journey through Spain and Morocco during 1832-3. Roberts left London on 21st August 1838 for a far more ambitious, extended trip to the Near East and Holy Land. He travelled through Egypt before moving onto Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and modern-day Israel, before returning to London, arriving at the end of July 1839. Roberts' friend and biographer, James Ballantine described the visit as the 'great central episode of his artistic life; and the fulfilment of 'the dream of his life from boyhood; (James Ballantine, Life of David Roberts, R.A. 1866, quoted in Helen Guiterman & Briony Llewellyn, David Roberts, 1987, p. 69).

Roberts was in Jaffa between 25th and 27th March 1839 and two of his watercolours of the city, both dated 26th March, were lithographed in The Holy Land volume II; the present watercolour showing Jaffa looking north and a second watercolour depicted the city looking south, pl. 61 of vol. II of The Holy Land. In the accompanying text, Roberts describes in detail Jaffa's commanding coastal position: 'On the South, it overlooks a wide and rich succession of plains spreading to Gaza; on the North, its horizon is the noble ridge of Mount Carmel'. He continues: 'The appearance of Jaffa from the sea is stately. To eyes wearied with the monotony of the shore, and the hovels which form its villages, its situation is commanding from its being built on a cone-shaped eminence which dips boldly in the sea… Most of the streets are paved in steps; and the houses, some of which are of considerable size, stand in terraces and thus add to the general effect… 'Here Noah is said to have built the Ark! - here Andromeda to have been exposed to the Sea-Monster; - and here Perseus to have bathed the wounds received in battle with the Centaurs'.

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