The Cascade opposite the House, Hafod, Cardiganshire, Wales

John `Warwick' Smith

Sold



REF: 2895

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Description

Guy Peppiatt Fine Art Ltd.
Riverwide House, 6 Mason's Yard, Duke St. St. James's, London, SW1Y 6BU
T: 020 7930 3839 M: 07956 968 284 E: guy@peppiattfineart.co.uk www.peppiattfineart.co.uk

John 'Warwick' Smith (1749-1831)
The Cascade opposite the House, Hafod, Cardiganshire, Wales

Signed on reverse of mount: Cascade opposite the House/J. Smith 1793
Watercolour over pencil
33.9 by 50.4 cm.,13 ¼ by 19 ¾ in.

Provenance:
Anonymous sale, Christie's London, 18 June 1980, lot 82, where bought by the present owner

Engraved:
By J. C. Stadler (fl. 1780-1812), as plate III in Fifteen Views Illustrative of a Tour to Hafod in Cardiganshire, the Seat of Thomas Johnes Esq M.P., 1810

During the latter part of the 18th century, Wales became a fashionable destination with tourists and artists alike. The Napoleonic Wars meant that Britain was cut off from the rest of Europe and so travellers and artists turned inward for inspiration. Wales, with its dramatic landscape, castles, coast and history captured the imagination. Furthermore, various publications brought the landscape of Wales to the notice of the wider public. In 1776, Paul Sandby (1731-1809) published XII views in North Wales. In 1778 and 1781, Thomas Pennant (1726-98) published his 2 volume Tours in Wales. The following year, the Rev. William Gilpin (1724-1804) published, Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales etc.

'Warwick' Smith was in the vanguard of artists travelling to Wales. He undertook his first visit in 1784 and the inspiration he found in the dramatic landscape of the country is clear: he made a total thirteen trips between 1784 and 1806.

The Hafod estate was in poor shape when Thomas Johnes inherited it, following his father's death in 1780. However, Johnes fell in love with the estate and its scenery and so set about an ambitious programme of transformation. He built a new house and created extensive gardens, laid out new avenues and landscapes and Hafod became a popular stopping off point for visitors to the region.

James Edward Smith, president of the Linnean Society, who undertook the publication of The Tour to Hafod, notes in the preface that the illustrations are all taken from earlier watercolour 'by Mr John Smith, an artist of well-deserved celebrity.' He continues by describing the House on 'rising ground, in a rich and beautiful valley, watered by the river Ystwith, and encompassed with bold hills, richly wooded, of a great variety and forms. These woods abound with magnificent water-falls, formed chiefly by three mountain streams that empty themselves into the Ystwith… The uppermost of these falls is in seen in Plate III, from a rustic bridge and mossy seat, built across the stream. Lower down the rivulet makes a still more beautiful cascade, in a sequestered dell within a short walk of the house'. (J.E.Smith, Fifteen Views Illustrative of a Tour to Hafod in Cardiganshire, the Seat of Thomas Johnes Esq M.P., 1810, p. 9)

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