

The background of the cover is a classical oil painting. It depicts a coastal scene with a rocky shore in the foreground. On the left, a woman in a white headscarf and a man in a white shirt and dark coat are seated on a wooden bench, engaged in conversation. In the center, a man in a red jacket is lifting a child into the air. To the right, a woman in a blue dress is reclining on a large rock. A small dog is jumping towards the center. In the background, a small boat with a sail is on the water, and a large cliffside rises behind it. The sky is filled with soft, textured clouds. The entire scene is rendered with fine brushwork and a rich color palette.

GALLERY
NOTES®

from

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

90TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

GALLERY
NOTES®

from

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

90TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

17 AVERY ROW, BROOK STREET,
LONDON W1K 4BF

TEL: +44 (0)20 7493 7567

WWW.JOHNMITCHELL.NET
ENQUIRIES@JOHNMITCHELL.NET

FOREWORD

It is ninety years since our grandfather, John Mitchell, began the art dealing business which we run today. Over the many years there have been numerous premises (even for a while one in New York City in the 1940s) and changes at the helm of the firm, from founder to son, and then in turn to grandsons. Today, with a first-floor gallery just off Bond Street, paintings by the same artists which John Mitchell advocated, and ownership within the family, the dealership remains recognisably the same. Most importantly, we strive to adhere to the same guiding principles of discretion, integrity and responsibility.

John Mitchell's first career as a conservator of paintings, especially those of the Dutch and Flemish Old Masters, had imbued him with an uncommon understanding of the distinct techniques of each artist and the physical processes involved in their creation. These insights, when conjoined with an ingrained commercial flair, enabled him better than most to explain a Dutch landscape or a Flemish 'kermesse' to his clients, and thereby persuaded them that rather than being seen merely as relics from a distant time in early modern Europe, the enduring desirability – and physical durability – of these paintings made them just as relevant to viewers in 1930s London. This hands-on approach to paintings was infused in all three of his children, with his eldest, his daughter Pat, working with him in London in the 1950s, and learning the rudiments of conservation work. In the 1960s this same path was to be followed by both sons, Peter and Paul, with Peter (our father) successfully continuing the firm into the 1990s, when we ourselves joined him in business until his retirement in 2011. Today, and by an elegant coincidence, we find ourselves sharing a characterful building with our afore-mentioned uncle, Paul Mitchell, the renowned authority on picture frames.

Nearly a century later, the essence of John Mitchell Fine Paintings remains the same, with an emphasis on - and understanding of - the primacy of the physical condition of paintings, rigorous selectivity in what we buy and put forward to our clientèle, and the necessary scholarship to be able to describe and promote it. We pride ourselves on the fact that not only do we research and write about our paintings, but that we are equally happy to hang and light them in clients' homes as well as help with the cleaning, restoration and repairs: an academic grasp of paintings balanced by practical know-how. Furthermore, like our predecessors we continue to promote the work of less familiar artists on the basis that their best paintings are more satisfying and enjoyable than weaker ones by the arbitrary 'canon' of recognised painters. Quality rather than 'name' should be the overriding concern in the buying of paintings, and this enlightened approach means picture collecting does not have to be the preserve of the very wealthy, a common misconception which we continually seek to dispel. Robustly encouraged by our father from his own, considerable experience of publishing, my brother and I have



both written books about artists and enjoy the lasting satisfaction which they have brought. In my own case, I wrote about the English eighteenth-century landscape painter, Julius Caesar Ibbetson (see pp. 18-19), largely because my grandfather, a fellow Yorkshireman, had always liked his art. In the foreword, I wrote that 'it would have amused, though not surprised, Ibbetson, who urged his colleagues "to avoid Picture-dealers as serpents", to know that his work has now found favour with three generations of the same family of art dealers.' By contrast, William Mitchell's splendid monograph on the Chamonix painter and climber, Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913), focuses on a remarkable man who was entirely forgotten until we found some paintings by him twenty-five years ago. (Again, we bought them not because we knew anything about the artist but because of their quality and originality.) Since then, our firm has been able to restore the international reputation which Loppé enjoyed in his lifetime and to enable a whole new generation of collectors to enjoy his dramatic paintings.

It has often been said that as dealers our artistic sphere is a wide one, and it is true that we are not specialists in the narrowest sense of the word. Not only is this neatly reflected in the wide gulf in time, subject and style between Ibbetson and Loppé, but it is also to be celebrated in this special edition of *Gallery Notes*, with paintings, pastels and drawings from the seventeenth to the

late nineteenth century, of different subjects and from different countries. We rejoice in the diversity and range of traditional paintings which we deal in, and perpetuate the interest in many of the artists and schools for which we have long been known and regardless of whether they are 'in' or 'out' of fashion, such as the seventeenth-century flower painting by Bouillon (pp. 8-9), Verelst (pp. 10-11), Pillement (pp. 26-29), Stevens (pp. 34-37) and Guillemet (p. 40-43).

Gallery Notes was started in the 1950s and has been sent out year on year ever since. To this day it remains the firm's primary means of communicating with our friends and clients – both long-standing and more recent. The earliest editions (see opposite.) featured one picture with a write-up and the aim was as stated below: 'Gallery Notes is published to acquaint the readers with the paintings offered for sale by John Mitchell & Son, Fine Paintings'

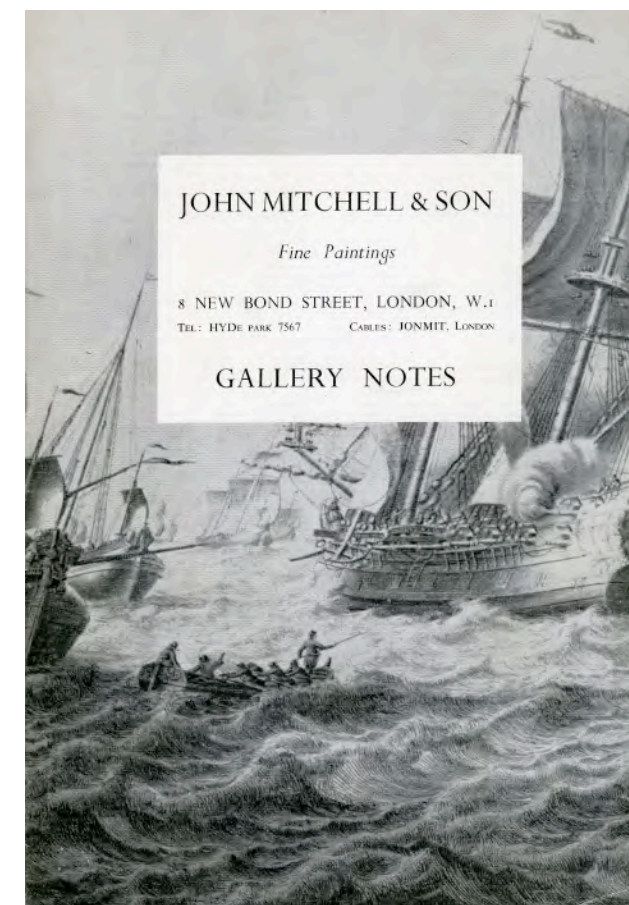
Each edition of *Gallery Notes*, now a registered trademark, still carries that sentence on the back cover and regardless of the number of pages and illustrations which can vary according to our exhibitions and art fairs, the principle of regular but not too frequent news about new acquisitions has become our 'house' style. Whilst *Gallery Notes* is also available in a digital format we remain mindful of not sending out too many unnecessary emails to our all-important distribution list.

The portraiture representation in our summer exhibition has, at the last minute, been somewhat depleted by the long overdue reunion of two noble children. Our pastels portrait of Lady Henrietta Cavendish of 1790 by John Russell [see opposite], is now destined to join that of her sister, Georgiana, bought last year by the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, and soon they will hang alongside each other there, as they did at the Royal Academy in 1790. After several years of waiting for others to share in our unswerving faith in this flawless and exceptional pastel, a medium still seen as esoteric by too many collectors (see pp. 28-29), this happy outcome is vindication of our conviction that quality will always prevail.

After long months of being unable to do so because of the pandemic, and all the more so for a second summer without the grand MASTERPIECE fair in Chelsea, we warmly invite all our clients and friends to come to our summer exhibition and share in our 90th anniversary.

Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the readers of *Gallery Notes* for their ongoing support and interest in John Mitchell Fine Paintings.

JAMES MITCHELL
WILLIAM MITCHELL
June 2021



GIUSEPPE RECCO (1634-1695)

A still life with bread, tuna, olives, cardoons and a basket of figs

oil on canvas, 22¾ x 28 in. (58 x 71 cm.)
signed lower right 'Gios:R' with G & I in monogram

With the painter's elegant initials seemingly carved into the crude stone ledge or table, this hitherto unrecorded 'kitchen scene' still life is a fine addition to Recco's known work.

A distinctive double bread roll is placed next to some mushrooms in front of a basket of figs, grapes and bean pods which dominates the right-hand side of the composition. A blue and white *maiolica* plate is propped next to the basket capturing the light at its leading edges. On the far left of the ledge one or two cardoons have been laid out behind some black olives wrapped in paper and a succulent piece of tuna fish.

Giuseppe Recco came from a family of painters and played a leading role in the evolution of still life painting in seventeenth century Naples. His father, Giacomo, specialized in large flower compositions while his uncle, Giovanni Battista, produced fish paintings – a typically Neapolitan genre.

Throughout his distinguished career, Giuseppe also painted flowers as well as his celebrated still lifes of fish but it was the intensity in which he observed light and the clarity of his pictures which set his work apart from his contemporaries. His closest rival was Giuseppe Battista Ruoppolo (1629-1693) who Recco was known to have studied with under Paolo Porpora (1617-1673). Ruoppolo's still lifes were decorative and theatrical whereas Recco was influenced by Flemish pictures which were popular and much admired in Naples at the time and, in particular, the Spanish realist tradition of the more austere *bodegón*. These 'kitchen interior' still lifes are some of his finest works and like our picture suggest an early dating when Recco was aware of a group of *bodegones* by the Spaniard, Giuseppe de Ribera (1591-1652). There are similar 'twin' loaves of bread shown in a beautiful Recco in the Molinari Pradelli collection in Bologna as well as an important picture from the 1650s now in the National Museum of Capodimonte in Naples.

Although the biographical details remain unclear, later in his life Recco was called to work for Charles II of Spain. He was believed to have died in Alicante on his way to Madrid and yet other sources record him as having lived there for a number of years, becoming a Knight in the Castilian Order of Calatrava.

A full report about this beautiful still life by the esteemed scholar on Italian painting, Dr. John T. Spike, will soon be available.

WJM





JACOB VAN RUISDAEL (circa 1628-1682)

Waterfall in a Wooded Landscape

oil on canvas, 21 x 17½ in. (53.3 x 44.5 cm),
signed lower centre right. Painted circa 1670

Literature: S. Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael. A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings, Drawings and Etchings*, (2001), p.161, no.149

Provenance: A. Tischer, Basel; L. Koetser, London, Spring Exhibition, 1968, no.25, repr.; sale, anon. London, Christie's, 28 June 1974, no. 66 (25,000 gns.); dealer M. Koetser, Zurich; sale, anon. Koln, Lempertz, 12 May 2012, no. 1294, (€195,200) John Mitchell Fine Paintings, London; Asbjorn R. Lunde Collection, New York, 2013.

Looking through and beyond a waterfall, a herdsman can be seen fording a river with his sheep in tow. Behind him and to the right is a mature oak within a bosky landscape which gives way to an archetypal Ruisdael sky with receding clouds of varying height and thickness. Flashes of silver and pink suffuse the canopy of clouds as they become darker and more brooding towards the top. To the front and right hand of the picture composition two silver birches rise up over the riverbank. One is a sapling and the other a dying tree which has lost a branch. A flash of sunlight is rippling across the river below as it begins to funnel into the torrent. All round the bank of the river there are clusters of young oak trees clinging on to life. The imaginary mountain in the far left background balances the groups of trees on the right and creates a sense of depth back and beyond the river.

In many ways, Jacob van Ruisdael's paintings define Dutch seventeenth-century landscape. His pictures consistently outshine those by his numerous and gifted contemporaries and his impact on the genre of landscape art has lasted through the centuries.

Ruisdael was neither the most original nor innovative of the landscapists but was by far the most skilful and versatile interpreter of his native surroundings be it dunes, panorama, beach, rivers, forests or, rarer still, winter. He sought to monumentalize the scene and yet treated each oak, birch or clod of earth with individuality.

This splendid and immaculately preserved picture was dated to around 1670 by Professor Slive and comes from a period in which Ruisdael was inspired by the Scandinavian scenery depicted by his fellow countryman from Alkmaar, Allaert van Everdingen (1621-1675). By 1650 Everdingen had begun to focus on upright pictures representing waterfalls with rocky foregrounds and mills or precariously perched cabins. Perhaps the finest example is in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich and there is no doubt that his Scandinavian motifs were a popular theme amongst the landscape painters of the time. Ruisdael was no exception and although he never travelled to Norway or Sweden he began to include some features from the Dutch-German border territory such as rolling hills and castles which he had experienced during his *Wanderjahr* in 1651 when he travelled to Bentheim in Westphalia.

WJM

MICHEL BOUILLON (active 1638-1674)

A tulip with narcissi, auriculae and other flowers in a glass vase

oil on copper

14¾ x 11¼ in. (37.5 x 28.5 cm.)

signed and dated 1640

Born in Tournai and master there in 1638, only a few works by Bouillon are identified with certainty. They range from small simple bouquets as seen in our work here, to very large fruit and flower compositions against architectural backgrounds. This exquisite work on a pristine copper sheet is unusual for being both signed and dated. The northern French painter shows a debt to the contemporary Flemish master Daniel Seghers (1590-1661) in his treatment of the clear glass vase and naturally arranged bouquet contrasted against a dark background which has been thinly painted to allow the warm tonality of the copper support to show through.

JAB





SIMON PIETERSZ. VERELST (1644-1721)

A Flowerpiece

oil on canvas
24½ x 19½ in. (62.5 x 49.5cm.)

Provenance:

Galerie Sanct Lucas, Vienna, 1957, Julius Bühler, Munich, 1959, Galerie Fischer, Luzern, 1964, Christie's, London, 7th July 2000, lot 118, Koller Auktionen, Zurich, 22nd March 2013, lot 3041, Private collection, New York.

Literature:

F. Lewis *Simon Pietersz. Verelst*, Leigh on Sea, England, 1979, p.33, no. 76, ill.
RKD, The Hague, Netherlands, no. 72072

On a stone ledge stands a glass vase of roses, irises, peonies and poppies. A rose leaf hangs over the ledge at the left, while to the right is a carnation. With its greeny-grey leaves the poppy was a favourite of Verelst whose mastery of light, shadow and colouring empowered him to paint such sophisticated floral compositions; flowerpieces that would entrance Restoration London.

From a family of painters in the Hague, Simon Verelst left for England in 1669 having only spent a few years in his hometown's prestigious painters' guild, the *Confrérie Pictura*. Foreign artists were welcomed in London and with patronage from the Dukes of Buckingham and York, as well as the Earl of Shaftesbury, Verelst quickly made a name for himself as one of the most successful and expensive painters in the capital.

Recent exhibitions about Charles II and the Baroque movement in Britain have reminded us that the King owned six paintings by Verelst and along with the oft documented praise that Samuel Pepys lavished upon "a Dutchman newly come over, one Everelst" after a studio visit, this helps explain why he began styling himself as the 'God of Flowers' and the 'King of Painters.' Indeed, Pepys wrote in his famous diary that he had felt compelled to touch one of the paintings in order to convince himself that the dew drops had in fact been painted. Alas, like the sumptuous flowers portrayed in his bouquets, Verelst's laurels wilted and in the early 1680s he underwent a psychotic breakdown and was confined to an asylum. The painter recovered to some extent and remained active in London, also as a portraitist, but the magic of the early 1670s had gone.

Despite a remarkable career in England and one which benefitted from the lack of competition as a specialist flower painter outside of his native land, in his formative years Verelst was influenced by the work of Willem van Aelst from Delft. In developing his painterly brushwork combined with the use of buttery impasto in parts, it seems likely that Verelst had already refined his technique before he crossed the North Sea. In 1707 the painter and art theorist, Gerard de Lairesse wrote in his *Groot Schilderboek* that to his mind Verelst was the finest of all Dutch flower painters:

'Yes, if there has ever been a distinguished flower painter, he was that man. Neither Mario de Fiori, nor Father Seghers, nor de Heem brought the art to such excellence....'

These words by a Dutch *kenner* and contemporary of the painter cannot be dismissed lightly and, in fairness, one could simply add that Simon Verelst ranks amongst the great names from the school of flower painting -a tradition that has long been championed and promoted by this firm.

WJM

JAN DAVIDSZ. DE HEEM (1606-1684)

A still life with lobster, roemer, pewter tankard and a lemon,

oil on panel
29½ × 24½ in. (75 × 62 cm.)
signed and dated 1632

Provenance:

Sutton Place, Surrey;
Christie's, London: 9th July 1982, lot 57;
Asbjorn R. Lunde Collection, New York.

Literature:

Dr. Fred G. Meijer, *Jan Davidsz. De Heem (1606-1684) A dissertation and catalogue raisonné*.
Part 1 and part 2, June 2016, Universitaet van Amsterdam, supervised by E.J. Sluijter, catalogued and
illustrated, p.32, no. A024

Positioned next to a bunch of grapes and vine leaves, two boiled lobsters with a cut and peeled lemon and a peach on a pewter plate produce complex reflections in Jan Davidsz. De Heem's early *banquetje* (banquet piece).

With its restrained colours and thinly applied paint, this beautiful still life on an oak panel belongs to a scarce group of recorded and dated works from the period when De Heem lived in Leiden before he moved to Antwerp in the mid-1630s where he became known for his flamboyant and Baroque flower bouquets. Having experimented with *vanitas* paintings in his formative years, whilst in Leiden De Heem began to paint in the manner of the Haarlem still life master painters such as Willem Claesz. Heda and Pieter Claesz. who specialized in the 'monochrome' *ontbijt* or breakfast piece pictures. Their cool greyish-brown compositions were highly finished and using the shiny surfaces of Dutch Roemer glasses, tankards and silver or pewter tableware Heda, in particular, achieved illusions of great intricacy. In De Heem's fine and similarly sized *Still Life with a Nautilus Cup* (The Barber Institute, Birmingham) also from 1632, it is interesting to compare the prominence he gave to the exquisitely rendered lemon peel- a hallmark of the Haarlem practitioners -with the one in our banquet piece. Looking at the accuracy with which he rendered the surface of the lemon rind, the delicate tendrils of the vine leaves and even the lobsters' wispy antennae, it seems unsurprising that as his career went from strength to strength once in Antwerp, De Heem was destined to become perhaps the greatest of all the still life and flower painters in the Netherlands. Born in Utrecht and having studied with Balthasar van der Ast, one of the founding fathers of still life paintings, De Heem subsequently absorbed the Flemish traditions of Jan Breughel's work in Antwerp before taking on his own illustrious pupils such as Abraham Mignon and Elias van den Broeck. Few other artists could boast of a richer heritage within a genre of painting.

WJM





GEORGE BARRET, RA (?1728/32-1784)

Cattle in a wooded landscape, with a church on a hill beyond

pastel on paper, laid down on canvas
16 x 23 in. (40.4 x 58.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Christie's, 20th May 1999, lot 143;
The Ross Collection, Knockmore, Co. Wicklow.

Literature:

N. Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800* (online edition), no. J.1282.101636

Forty years ago George Barret could still be described as '[b]y far the best-known Irish landscape painter' – no casual hyperbole in some dealer's catalogue, this, but the verdict of the leading scholars of traditional Irish art, Crookshank and Fitzgerald (see [Bibliography](#)). Today, however, to most picture collectors the term 'Irish landscape' means towering clouds over the Connemara uplands by Paul Henry (1896-1958), and Barret's tranquil parkland scenes, with their imposing trees and romantic waterfalls have fallen into comparative obscurity. In some ways I can identify with this shift in taste: I have always admired the luminosity and veracity in Henry's work, and he captured a version of Ireland that we recognise. Barret, on the other hand, was not really a painter of Ireland, but more a naturalistic landscape painter who happened to come from Dublin, and who made his career in England after 1763. His early Irish work is not thoroughly understood, although it is accepted that he matured early and was capable of an unexpected variety of styles, for example a series of overdoors and inset panels for Russborough in Wicklow, depicting Italianate scenery and Roman ruins. Scarcely any paintings from this period could, however, be said to be topographically accurate views, and it was more for its wild nature, with rocks, gullies and overhanging trees, that Barret felt inspired by the Dargle valley outside Dublin, where he worked for Lord Powerscourt.

George Barret was acquainted with Edmund Burke when he was studying at Trinity College, and would not only have known of the student's ideas on the Sublime, famously to be published in 1757, but must as a result have actively sought contrast and drama in his compositions. Dispensing with 'the airy rococo quality' of his earliest work, Barret now established himself in this vein in England, first as a successful exhibitor at the Free Society and then as a Foundation Member of the Royal Academy in 1768. His work drew favourable comparisons with Claude and, perhaps because of his early appreciation of Irish landscape, Barret, along with the native Richard Wilson and Paul Sandby, was a pioneer of the Welsh picturesque view, and was described by his friend Burke as 'a wonderful observer of the accidents of nature.' His clients came to include many of the distinguished patrons of the day, including the Duke of Portland, Lord Dalkeith, Lord Rockingham (of *Whistlejacket* fame) and Lord George Cavendish, while his panorama of the Lake District at Norbury Park for William Locke was considered his masterpiece.

One of the enduring pleasures of dealing in the work of less exalted artists of the Georgian age is their capacity to surprise us more than two centuries later. This gracefully subtle work on paper by Barret turns on its head the accepted wisdom of our Irish scholars that '[h]e does not seem to have used pastel.' They were, of course, well aware of his skill as a draughtsman and there is a late group of gouaches, mostly inspired by the Lake District and marked by a florid palette and clever use of light. There is no precedent in Barret, however, for the consummate use of coloured chalks seen here, and I should confess that at first glance the name Gainsborough came to mind, not an outrageous coincidence given that he and Barret were exact contemporaries. The most telling clue to Barret's authorship lies in the splendid white bull, for even as early as 1808 a fellow artist, Edward Edwards, noted that Barret 'sometimes painted animals which he executed in a bold and masterly manner'. Barret exhibited *A Bull* at the new Royal Academy in 1770, and there exist numerous drawings of cattle by him.

Careful examination of the fragile support has shown that Barret worked on a very fine sheet of paper, prepared with a wash of blue-grey bodycolour, and laid down on a piece of linen, unlined and still on its original stretcher. In this delicate, autumnal composition, said to be of Powerscourt but really rather timeless and ethereal, Barret indulges his fascination with Claude, and shows, in the words of Martin Hardie, 'his fine sense of drawing combined with fluency and quiet, graceful colour.'

JFM

Bibliography:

Edward Edwards ARA, *Anecdotes of Painters* (1808);
Thomas Bodkin, *Four Irish Landscape Painters* (1920);
Martin Hardie, *Watercolour Painting in Britain*, 3 Vols. (1966);
Anne Crookshank and Desmond Fitzgerald, *The Painters of Ireland c.1620-1920* (1978)



PAUL SANDBY, RA (1730-1809)

The Upper Gate, Conwy Castle, North Wales

oil on copper, 10¾ x 15¼ in. (27.5 x 38.6cm.)
with antique carved and gilded English frame

Paul Sandby's traditional title of 'father of the English watercolour school' has much justification. He freed watercolour from a subservient role to oil painting, and by the introduction of the aquatint process provided the ideal means for the reproduction of watercolours, widely diffusing their appeal. A founder member of both the Royal Academy and the Society of Artists, Sandby's work in oil, gouache and watercolour ranges wide in technique and subject matter, and was of 'powerful encouragement' to the next generation of British landscape artists, including Thomas Girtin and Turner. Paul Sandby was a prolific exhibitor, showing over one hundred and twenty pictures at the RA between 1769 and his death in 1809. Throughout Britain, and from street life in her cities and domestic gardens to ancient castles and ruined abbeys, he recorded a country experiencing rapid social and commercial development.

In 1771 Sandby toured North Wales in the company of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, 4th Bt. (1749-1789) and this expedition was to have profound consequences on both the development of British landscape painting and for the discovery of Wales as a destination for tourists. The huge castles at Caernarvon and Conway in their strategic and dramatic settings stood for the turbulence, drama and territorial upheavals of the Middle Ages, and, to Sandby's generation, increasingly evoked Britain's largely mysterious past. As at Windsor, Sandby would continue to explore in his work the Welsh castles and ruins for the rest of his life, and here in the 1790s Julius Caesar Ibbetson (another artist long championed by our firm) would produce his finest work.

Our painting is uncommon in Sandby's extensive oeuvre for being painted on a sheet of copper, but it is quite probably one discarded by a printmaker, with whose profession Sandby was closely associated. The view is typical Sandby, with an accurate rendering of one of the castle's gateways and fortifications (see the photo below of the view today) animated by ordinary folk who made their home there. Note, too, how he has made a point of documenting the two women in their traditional Welsh high, black silk hats.

JFM





JULIUS CAESAR IBBETSON (1759-1817)

Orchard Bay, Isle of Wight

oil on canvas
20 x 26¼ in. (51 x 67 cm.)
signed and dated 1796

Exhibited: Royal Academy, 1796, no. 47

The remote southern side of the Isle of Wight, with its cliffs and rocky coves, was reputedly the haunt of wreckers and bootleggers, and this intensified the island's romantic appeal to artists like de Louthembourg, Morland (see pp. 20-21) Ibbetson and, later, the Rev. Gilpin in his treatise of 1798 on *Picturesque Beauty*. Our summery, buoyant scene of a sailor's homecoming was the last of a series of Isle of Wight subjects exhibited by Ibbetson at the Royal Academy in the 1790s, and is almost certainly the uplifting pendant to the gothic horror of his dramatic *Storm: Back of the Isle of Wight* now in the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio (see illustration).

JFM



GEORGE MORLAND (1763-1804)

The Fisherman's Toast or Fishermen on Shore

oil on canvas

18 x 22 in. (46 x 56 cm.)

with 'Morland' frame

Later published as an engraving by William Hilton
(1786-1839)

'Precocious, naturally gifted and naturally dissolute,' Morland exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy for the last twenty years of his life, and was initially the master of genre and childhood subjects, and then of rustic scenes, smugglers and gypsies. He is first recorded on the Isle of Wight around 1789, when he appears in a number of Thomas Rowlandson's drawings from his tour of the island, particularly those of the interior of inns. At that time Morland had left London to escape his creditors and moved to Shanklin, from where he soon moved again to Freshwater Bay. The coastline of the Isle of Wight appears frequently in his work from then on, not least for the same reasons as for his friend Julius Ibbetson (see pp. 18-19), and the characters in this canvas typify the rather picaresque company which Morland kept there, with this picture thought to date from either 1798 or 1799.

This attractive and jaunty scene is exactly the sort of painting which gave rise to the craze for Morland's work that broke out after his death and which resumed towards the end of the nineteenth century (and which caused his work to be copied extensively). The rather suggestive subject matter is much at odds with the artist's altogether more refined *The Visit to the Boarding School*, a personal favourite of mine on display at The Wallace Collection, and the contrast between the two shows the breadth of Morland's accomplishment.

JFM





JOHN THOMAS SERRES (1759-1825)

*Procida and Ischia seen from the Capo Miseno in the Bay of Naples; and
A Cave at Sorrento in the bay of Naples looking towards Ischia – a pair (2)*

pen and ink, and watercolour, in painted ovals
both 8¼ x 10¼ in. (21 x 26 cm.)

the former with remains of signature, and the latter inscribed with title
below oval.



These are typically accurate scenes from Serres' memorable voyage through France and Italy in 1790, drawn in his very distinctive inky style. In the lower of the two he has made a point of including the abbey of San Michel Arcangelo on Procida. Note, too, his attempt to render the rather elaborate ensign of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies at the stern of the man o'war. Serres would later follow his father, Dominic Serres (1725-1791), and become 'Marine Painter to HM the King'.

JFM

FRANCIS WHEATLEY (1747-1801)

Courtship and Matrimony - a pair (2)

oil on canvas
13½ x 10¾ in. (34.5 x 27.5 cm.)

Literature:

Mary Webster, *Francis Wheatley*, London, 1970, pp. 75, 151-2,
cat. nos. 111 & 112 (both illustrated), and as painted circa 1795.

In his choice of subject matter, palette and technique, Francis Wheatley strikes us today as the quintessential English eighteenth-century artist. His early landscapes are clearly under the influence of Gainsborough (1727-1788) and his topographical watercolours very much in the manner of Paul Sandby (1731-1809) (see pp. 16-17), . He could handle with equal success sentimental rustics in the manner of George Morland (1763-1804) (see pp. 20-21), and dignified portraits, these latter also bringing to mind the small full-lengths in a wooded or rural setting of Arthur Devis (1711-1787). There is even with Wheatley the back story of a disordered private life, of penury and gout which is almost obligatory in discussing many of his contemporaries!

This pair of small canvases, very much a case of 'before' and 'after' in the story they tell, belong to a rich seam in Wheatley's work which became widely known through engravings, the best known being his series entitled *The Cries of London* (1792-5) which depicted female street-sellers. The art historical terms 'genre' and 'moralizing' invariably attach themselves to paintings such as ours, but one also discerns in them Wheatley's enjoyment of colour and of painting fabrics, a particular skill he learnt from an early teacher, John Hamilton Mortimer (1740-1779).

The present paintings were last sold by our firm in July 1966 to a Channel Islands collector, and they have now returned to us – happily still in excellent condition and only requiring a light clean to revive them.

JFM



JEAN PILLEMENT (1728-1808)

A shepherd and maids in a wooded landscape

black chalk and stump on paper
9 x 11¾ in. (23 x 29.7 cm.)
signed and dated 1794

Pillement readily understood the English penchant for landscape and developed his original interpretation of the genre, derived from Nicolaes Berchem, Claude-Joseph Vernet, François Boucher, and a merging of observed nature and rococo fantasy. This sensitive chalk drawing from 1794 is typical of this blend, with the Berchemesque theme of the shepherd who rests with his flock in the midday sun and converses with passing maids, set not in a naturalistic landscape but a timeless sylvian fantasy.





JEAN PILLEMENT (1728 - 1808)

Pastoral scenes inspired by the surroundings of Sintra, Portugal – a pair (2)

pastels on paper

18 x 26½in. (46 x 67 cm.)

both signed lower left: Jean Pillement and dated 1790

Mr PILLEMENT, Painter to the King of POLAND, being returned to London, after an Absence of 12 Years, begs Leave to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry that his study of Painting, Drawing, and Crayons being greatly improved, he proposes soon to make a publick Exhibition of the Works he has brought over with him: consisting of 33 Drawings in Chalk, Oyl, and Crayons; among which are two Large and Capital, in a manner entirely new, and invented solely for the Cabinet of the Empress Queen.

Pillement's work has graced editions of *Gallery Notes* for more than fifty years and this fine pair of pastels in immaculate condition are some of the best that we have had. In the eighteenth century pastel was almost exclusively the province of the portraitist: there were no history pictures in the medium, few still lifes and, as Neil Jeffares has pointed out, Pillement was the only pastels specialist consistently doing landscapes – and certainly larger ones than anyone else. The notice above (from *The Daily Advertiser* 3 June 1772) suggests that Pillement himself was every bit as proud of his pastels (or 'crayons' as they are referred to in the language of the age) as he was of his oil paintings, and, after many years of extolling to readers of *Gallery Notes* the equal merits of his pastels, we are gratified to be able to hear it from the artist himself!

However interesting we may find this technical underpinning, it must, from our point of view at least, be subordinate to the merits of the pastel as a work of art. There seems to be no difficulty here: because the pastels have survived so well, we are able to enjoy these sunlit, light hearted essays in the picturesque, so popular among the grand tourists of the eighteenth century.

JFM



PANCRACE BESSA (1772-1835)

A study of apricots

watercolour

9¾ x 7⅞ in. (24.7 x 19.5 cm.)

signed

with fine antique French frame

'In the case of an artist like Pancrace Bessa it is difficult to know whether he would have succeeded without instruction from Redouté, or whether he is unjustly overshadowed by the great master.' So wrote my father in his *European Flower Painters* of 1973 (see pp. 48), a copy of which must adorn the bookshelves of many of our more established clients and which provides a neat summary of Bessa's life. All that can be added is that Bessa lived in a veritable golden age of natural history science, with many new plants arriving in France to be cultivated in the botanical gardens of the Musée national d'Histoire Naturelle (commonly known as the 'Jardin des Plantes'), of the royals and of the aristocracy. These new plants required classification, description and illustration, and Bessa was one of hundreds of trained botanical artists who devoted themselves to this task. Bessa painted the originals for one of the most important French periodicals of the period—Mordant de Launay's (and later Loiseleur-Deslongchamp's) *Herbier Général de l'Amateur* (Paris, [1810–]1816–1827)—depicting in watercolour on vellum five hundred and seventy-two rare and new plants growing in the gardens of Paris. Bessa was also a teacher of flower painting, and one of his pupils was also his patroness—the Duchesse de Berry, sister-in-law of Charles X. The king then purchased all of the originals for the *Herbier* as a gift for the duchess.

JFM





MELANIE DE COMOLERA (1789-1854)

A bouquet of flowers and grapes, including crown imperial, roses, iris and hibiscus

oil painting on marble
circular, 16½ (42 cm.) in diameter

Exhibited: Paris, Salon, 1819

A remarkable flowerpiece on marble by a distinguished French flower painter. A pupil of Cornelis van Spaendonck and trained at the Manufacture royale de Sèvres, Mélanie moved to London in 1826 and became in turn painter to the Duchess of Clarence (later Queen Adelaide) and then to Queen Victoria.



ALFRED STEVENS (1823-1906)

L'Ours blanc or Le Repos du Modèle

oil on canvas, 8½ x 27½ in. (21.8 x 70 cm.)

signed in monogram upper right; with period parcel-gilt 'Degas' frame

[Stevens's work is] the best example, after Vermeer, of what modest realism can achieve, served by an eye that is able to pick out fleeting radiances, and by a craftsmanship that is able to bring these into harmony.

G.Vanzype, *Les Frères Stevens*, 1936, p.43

I often wonder if, when my late father was working on his book about Alfred Stevens, he could have imagined that more than fifty years later his sons would still be finding unknown treasures by the artist, and still learning about his remarkable life.

In 2016 we held a small Stevens exhibition to mark the re-emergence after eighty years of his beautiful and important *Mappemonde* of 1869, showing a lady holding a letter and contemplating a globe to chart the progress of a far-away lover. *Le Repos du Modèle* could scarcely be more different in mood and subject, but is of the same exquisite quality – and almost certainly of the same model. Unlike *Mappemonde* there is as

yet no record to be found of this unprecedented picture either in our own extensive Stevens archive or in that of the Comité Alfred Stevens in Paris, and so its discovery adds yet another dimension to what we already know of Stevens' prodigious output and of his glittering career in Paris at the time of the Impressionists.

Like most dyed-in-the-wool painters with turpentine in their veins, Stevens must, from time to time, have painted for the sheer pleasure of it. We have no means of knowing today if this was the case with this ravishing canvas, but perhaps the model was posing for an important commission and this study was

Painted during a break from the main task? Whatever gave rise to this intimate and sensual work, it leaves us in no doubt as to Stevens' stature as an artist.

In his book *Impressions sur la Peinture* Stevens reminds us that a profound understanding of and empathy with subject matter was of little use if the painter did not have the skill and craftsmanship to put his vision into paint, the perfect harmony of eye and hand. His ability to draw a woman perfectly, perhaps one-sixth lifesize, and lay on paint with the speed, accuracy and finesse we see here, is a concise summary of Alfred Stevens, all on a relatively small canvas. Excessively dirty and yellowed on arrival at the gallery, the cleaning has been nothing short of miraculous, for it shows the painting – among other attributes – to be a virtuoso exercise in different shades of white, off-white, cream and grey, in the tradition of the greatest Old Masters. Contrast the icy white of the polar bear rug with the delicate warmth of the model's pale skin; note, too, the extraordinary treatment of her clasped hands and the wholly convincing pose of one at peaceful rest. Not often do we find in Stevens' work such prominent pencil underdrawing, but then this is a real 'flesh and blood' woman, not the poupée of one of his imitators, and he was clearly at great pains to draw accurately her prone figure. How bold, too, to work on this unusual, landscape

canvas – almost unknown in the many hundreds of his other paintings of which we have illustrations.

Perhaps precisely because of this enormous output, Stevens' reputation has been wrongly impugned by association with many weak seascapes and figure paintings from later in his career, when penury dictated in his work 'quantity', not 'quality'. Reluctantly we have come to accept that not everyone therefore shares in the Mitchell family's belief in him, but Stevens deserves to be judged by his greatest achievements, of which this must surely be one. Today over thirty American museums and institutions own one or more of his paintings as a direct result of the prestige he enjoyed in the United States in his lifetime, and it comes as no surprise that as recently as last autumn the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston acquired another. I used to laugh off my father's observation that Stevens' greatest misfortune in life was to have been born Belgian and not French, but now I realise that he was entirely right: in his adopted country of France Stevens has never received the recognition he deserves, and is loftily dismissed as 'Ecole belge'! With such paintings as the present one we can be confident of their mistake.

JFM



ALFRED STEVENS (1823-1906)

Vapeur au clair de lune

oil on canvas, 22 x 18 in. (56 x 46 cm.)
signed



ALFRED STEVENS (1823-1906)

Clair de lune

oil on panel, 12 5/8 x 9 1/4 in. (32 x 23.5 cm.)
signed



ART UNION OF LONDON, mid-19th century.

Two Parian Ware bas-relief sculptures depicting subjects from the work of John Milton (1608-1674): *May Morning* (from his volume of poems of 1845), and *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* from *Paradise Lost* each 8 in. (20 cm.) in diameter, and inscribed with title; with polished black wood circular frames



The Art Union of London was established in 1836 and was intended to provide an affordable and more accessible way for people to enjoy work by modern artists. As its charter declared, '[The Art Union] has for its object the cultivation of a purer taste in matters of the fine arts, and their general advancement in the British empire, by the encouragement of native artists and an improved taste on the part of the public.' For a small annual fee subscribers were entitled to choose a large engraving and the right to enter a competition for an original painting. In addition to pictures the Union began to offer medallions, bronze statuettes and, as presented here, sculptures made of 'Parian Ware', a type of unglazed porcelain which was intended to resemble marble.



ANTOINE GUILLEMET (1841-1918)

The Vauban Tower, St Vaast la Hougue, Normandy

oil on canvas,

signed

15¾ x 21½ in. (40 x 55 cm.)



ANTOINE GUILLEMET (1841-1918)

A landscape with cottages in the Cotentin Peninsula, Normandy

oil on canvas,
15 x 21½ in. (38 x 55 cm.)
signed and dated 1905

In Manet's *Le Balcon* the tall, rather good-looking man standing behind Berthe Morisot and Fanny Claus, with a cigarette in hand, is Antoine Guillemet, who had, by then, already embarked on a very happy career as a painter. Yet Manet did more for his friend Guillemet than immortalise his appearance in this famous painting in the Louvre. He influenced the younger artist towards a painterly, impasto style of brushwork which was to remain characteristic of Guillemet's work until the end of his long life.

In later years, Guillemet told a newspaper critic how his father, a wealthy Normandy ship-owner, had not allowed him to go to sea as a boy. He had instead to content himself with painting the sea and shore, the river and its bank. Guillemet began doing so under the guidance of Corot, to whom he was devoted. His first Salon exhibits in 1865 were restrained in colour and touched with the misty tranquility of his teacher. Although Corot is always referred to as his teacher, Guillemet was eager to learn from others as well. He delighted to go out painting on the Seine with the Daubignys in their *Botin*, with 'Father' at his easel and young Karl Daubigny (see pp. 44-45) at the oars.

Guillemet made friends with an exceptionally wide circle of artists through the famous Cafe Guerbois meetings of the 1860s. Most of his contemporaries were the future Impressionists, however when in 1874, they decided to exhibit independently of the official Salon, in the face of constant rejection, Guillemet, like Manet preferred to keep to traditional paths. It was a fortunate decision as he would not have succeeded in trying to follow the new ideas. When repeated successes at the Salon won a place on the Salon jury for Guillemet in 1881, it gave him the right to introduce one painter without opposition. He seized the chance for Cezanne who had always been refused the admission which he so ardently wanted. Thus Cezanne appeared for the first time ever, listed as a pupil of Guillemet! When Guillemet became one of the 'Establishment' figures with high rank in the Legion of Honour, many Salon medals and several paintings in French museums, he was always respected because of his encouragement to others.

By the 1880s, the pattern of his life had settled into a curiously contrasted, but very contented, pattern. Winters were spent in Paris where his wit and charm were as highly prized as his paintings. Then suddenly, he would leave Paris for six months. The elegant boulevardier would be transformed into a roughly dressed, sunburnt figure rejoicing in the solitude of some obscure lodging near his beloved Normandy coast. There, he could devote himself without distraction to the vastness of the northern beaches and skies, conjuring up in his canvases the sound of waves.



KARL DAUBIGNY (1846-1886)

Loading a 'lougre' at low tide

oil on canvas
 47¼ x 75¼ in. (120 x 191 cm.)
 signed and dated 1875
 with fine Salon frame

Despite his considerable ability and reputation as one of the most pleasing painters of the second half of the nineteenth century, Karl Daubigny's artistic legacy has been rather eclipsed by that of his father, Charles-François (1817 – 1878). Karl's father formed one of the principal links between the Barbizon school and the Impressionists.

The Daubigny family settled at Auvers-sur-Oise in 1860 and along with many other artists, known as the 'Corot circle', Charles-François established himself as exclusively a landscapist. He was particularly drawn to river subjects, building a studio barge, 'le Botin', from which he painted on the Seine, Marne and Oise. Karl learnt to paint alongside his father and with a lifelong friend, Antoine Guillemet, (see pp. 40-43) the Daubignys became well known for their sketching expeditions on their river barge.

Move beyond the influenced of his father's landscapes Karl soon came to develop a more personal and sombre style. He began exhibiting at the Paris Salon in 1863, and won medals there in 1868 and 1874. Our Salon canvas is dated 1875 and another large format canvas also dated the same year, *La vallée de la Scie*, was acquired by the State and now hangs in the musée d'Orsay. 1875 was also the year Karl stood in for his elderly father as one of the pallbearers at Corot's funeral.

His subject matter was drawn from views near Auvers, the forests of Fontainebleau and Normandy. *Return of the fishing fleet to Trouville*, 1872 is an impressive painting now in the musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence and compares favourably with *Loading a 'lougre' at low tide*. The museums at Pau, Grenoble, Bayonne, Brest, Honfleur and Nancy all own examples of Karl Daubigny's work, as well as numerous museums in the United States, notably Boston, Detroit and San Francisco. Daubigny's seascapes were particularly sought after and the oyster gatherers and boats depicted in our 1875 canvas must have been a popular subject in a period now recognized for its excellence in paintings combining the livelihoods of coastal villages and landscapes as social realism, similar to those of Daubigny's Dutch contemporaries, Maris and Mesdag.

The 'lougre' or 'bisquine' in the Norman dialect, was a three masted, gaff- rigged lugger peculiar to Normandy and the Pas-de-Calais. The large-barrelled hull was designed to take a sizeable haul, and the fisherfolk in their bonnets are taking advantage of the low tide to load as much kelp and oysters as can be gathered. In the distance sailing boats cross the horizon as the wind catches the lugger's mainsheet under the slackened sails.

DAME LAURA KNIGHT, RA, RWS (1877-1970)

Study of a young woman

charcoal on paper
19½ x 15½ in. (49.5 x 39.4 cm.),
signed 'Laura Johnson'

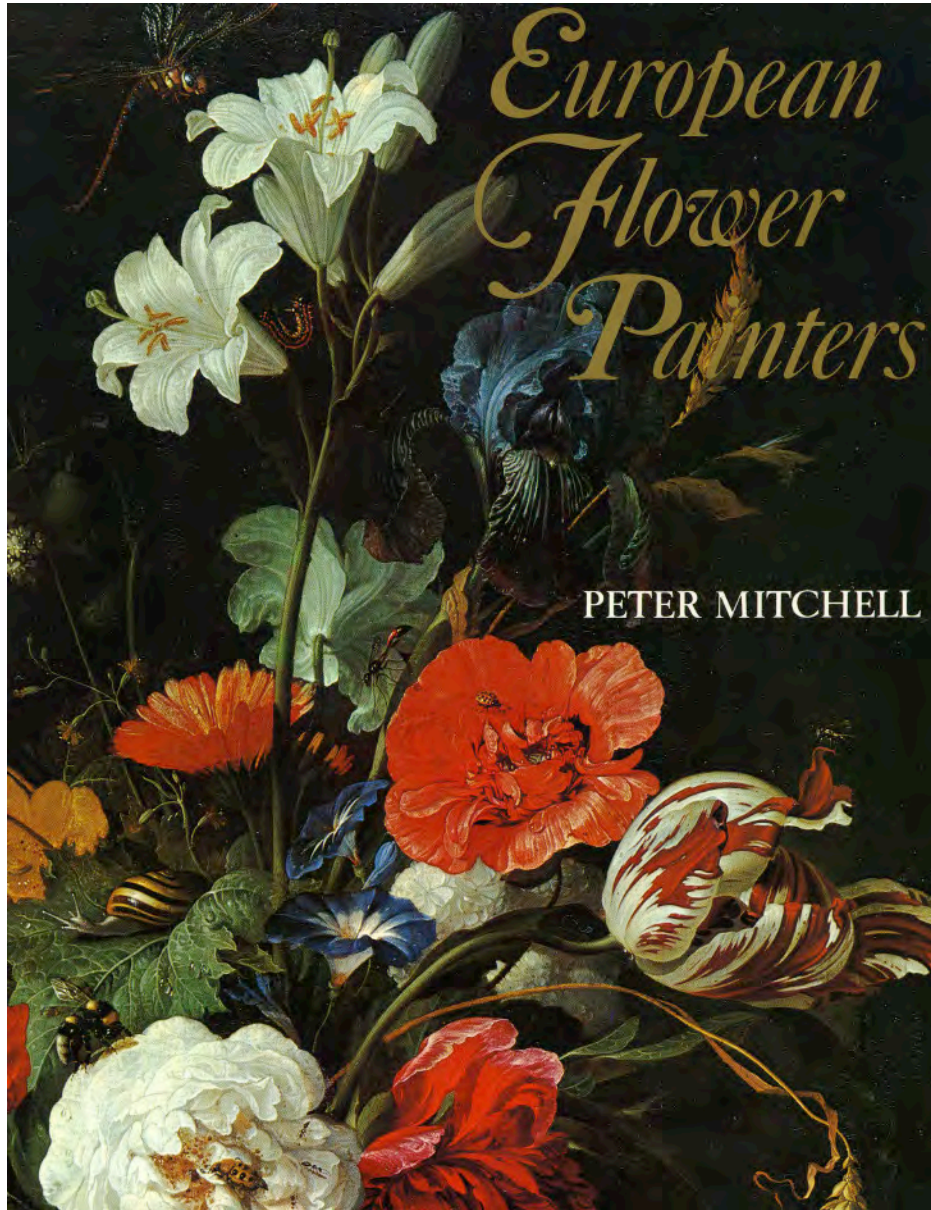
To be lent to the exhibition, *Laura Knight – A Panoramic View*, at the MK Gallery, Milton Keynes from 9th October 2021 – 20th February 2022.

Laura Knight is a prominent figure in the story of twentieth-century British art and one who has always been admired in our family. Both my grandfather and father bought and sold her charcoal drawings in prodigious quantities and, like them, I too have always appreciated Laura's innate gift for drawing, aptly reflected in the title she chose for her 1965 autobiography, *The Magic of a Line*. Furthermore, since my involvement with a fine exhibition of her ballet paintings at Nottingham in 2008, I have been persuaded that a major, comprehensive retrospective of all aspects of her work at a London institution is long overdue. Meanwhile, with over one hundred works from public and private collections, including our drawing here, the MK Gallery's exhibition this coming autumn is eagerly awaited.

When they think of Laura Knight, people tend to conjure up children splashing by the seaside or picnics on sunlit Cornish clifftops, but in truth she was a sincere, original and inquisitive artist blessed with an extraordinary talent. Her penetrating studies of gipsy folk at Iver in the 1920s were, for me, a highlight of the National Portrait Gallery's grouping of her portraits in 2013, while her work in the Second World War is never less than thought-provoking and, in the case of her monumental masterpiece, *The Dock, Nuremberg, 1946* (Imperial War Museum), chilling. Even if less stern in their subject matter, her abundant studies of the circus, boxing ring, ballet and theatre, whether in pencil, chalks, charcoal or line and wash - or a mixture of all of them - are always striking. Hers was an unbiased, alert vision, with a power of direct expression in every subject she touched upon. Even if clowns and circuses seem uncomfortably 'wrong' to modern tastes, the drawings themselves cannot be glibly dismissed as 'rather corny', in the words of the Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists. How much more *de nos jours* to recall that Laura Knight was, after all, the first woman to be elected to the Royal Academy in 1936! As a child Laura Knight, in her own words, 'had loved pencil and paper to be thrust through the bars of my cradle', and her mother, herself an art teacher, encouraged her to copy the work of nineteenth-century illustrators to be found in books about the house. At the age of thirteen, she enrolled at the Nottingham School of Art, and there her intuitive skill would have been nurtured by life drawing classes and, as she later readily admitted, sitting next to and copying a dashing student in *pince-nez* glasses called Harold Knight. Drawn at some point before they married in 1903, the academic study presented here is an early indication of Laura's exceptional draughtsmanship. Very much of its time, too, the sheet also bears out her teacher William Foster's emphasis on drawing with absolute attention to detail. It was drawings like this one which she sent to the national competition in London each year, and for which on one occasion she won a gold medal (which she then sold to support her mother and their household). A fine, comparable example in pure charcoal is illustrated in Caroline Fox's *Laura Knight* (1988), pl. 4, p. 13.

JFM





JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

17 AVERY ROW, BROOK STREET,
LONDON W1K 4BF
TEL: +44 (0)20 7493 7567

WWW.JOHNMITCHELL.NET
ENQUIRIES@JOHNMITCHELL.NET

GALLERY NOTES®

is published to acquaint readers with the paintings offered for sale at John Mitchell Fine Paintings. We hope that in receiving them you will share the interest and enjoyment which they have brought to collectors throughout the world for over sixty years.

JOHN MITCHELL FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

17 AVERY ROW, BROOK STREET,
LONDON W1K 4BF
TEL: +44 (0)20 7493 7567

WWW.JOHNMITCHELL.NET
ENQUIRIES@JOHNMITCHELL.NET

THE SOCIETY OF
LONDON
ART DEALERS