

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



George & John Smith of Chichester

Returning from Market

oil on canvas

12½ x 16 in. (32 x 40.8 cm.)

signed I.I G & J Smith

An exhibition at Kenwood House in 1967, 'The Origin of English Landscape Painting', drew some attention to a forgotten eighteenth-century artist called George Smith of Chichester. In his own lifetime he had enjoyed a very considerable reputation and distinguished patronage. His name, like that of Joseph Wright of Derby, is always linked to his place of birth. Yet, unlike Wright and most other artists of the period, Smith remained in Sussex and achieved his fame even though he was away from London and other artistic centres, like Bath.

Smith's larger, more formal landscapes were based on Claude's classical landscapes of the Roman 'campagna', these being a major formulative influence on English taste in the eighteenth century. The smaller, rural landscape here holds much charm, and from his treatment of foliage and his fine variations of darker hues, it is clear that Smith had studied not only Claude, but the great Dutch landscape painter, Jacob Ruisdael (1628-82). Yet, whatever the influences from abroad, Smith is unmistakably English in the mood of his Sussex landscapes. A note of particular interest is that this painting is the only known, signed example of the recorded collaboration of the two brothers.