

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Julius Caesar Ibbetson (1759 - 1817)

Grasmere

oil on canvas, 20 ½ x 27 (52 x 68.5 cm)

signed, dated and inscribed, 'Julius Ibbetson p./Ambleside Nov/1801'
with fine antique carved and gilded English frame

Provenance:

Sotheby's, 26th June 1968, lot 121, £2,000 to
John Mitchell & Son, London;
Private collection England since 1968.

Exhibited:

Grasmere, Dove Cottage, 1982, The Discovery of the Lake District, no. 118.

If Ibbetson's oil paintings of the Lake District are among his most sought after, then this peerless example has even greater interest for being painted by him in 1801, when he lived nearby at Ambleside. The majority of Ibbetson's Lakeland scenes were painted to order after he had moved away to Yorkshire, and therefore lack the immediacy and romance of the present canvas. The view looks northwards across the lake, with Helm Crag in the middle and Steel Fell just behind it. Dunmail Raise, the pass which is the old border between Cumberland and Westmorland, is off to the right. This view, or variations of it, was painted by almost every artist who visited the Lakes. The Wordsworths, who knew Ibbetson and his young, second wife, Bella, had a picnic on the island seen in the painting, as reported by Coleridge in a letter of July 1800 to Humphry Davy: "We drank tea the night before I left Grasmere on the Island in that lovely lake, our kettle swung over the fire hanging from the branch of a Fir Tree, and I lay & saw the woods, & mountains, & lake all trembling..."

This painting, last with our firm fifty years ago, exemplifies Ibbetson's synthesis of the influence of the Dutch landscape and cattle painters, and that of Gainsborough, with his own, inimitably pleasing style.