

# JOHN MITCHELL

## FINE PAINTINGS



**Francis Wheatley (1747 - 1801)**

**Courtship and Matrimony - a pair (2)**

oil on canvas  
34.5 x 27.5 cm.  
c.1795

Literature:

Mary Webster, *Francis Wheatley*, London, 1970, pp75, 151-2,

cat. nos. 111 & 112 (both illustrated), and as 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). He could handle with equal success sentimental rustics in the manner of George Morland (1763-1804), 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.