

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Julius Caesar Ibbetson (1759 - 1817)

View of Hawthornden Castle on the River North Esk, Midlothian, Scotland

oil on canvas

16 5/8 by 21 1/4 in. (42.5 by 54 cm.)

£9,500

Ibbetson spent the summer and autumn of 1800 in Midlothian in Scotland, where for much of the time he stayed in lodgings at Roslyn [Roslin]. His principal activity here was teaching the two daughters of Lady Balcarres, whom he had met in Edinburgh, and by whom he was evidently much charmed by. As well as numerous paintings of Roslin and the scenery nearby which survive today, Ibbetson produced several views of Hawthornden, an ancient castellated house dramatically situated on a cliff overlooking the upper reaches of the River Esk. This had been the home of the poet-laird, William Drummond (1585-1649), visited by the playwright Ben Jonson (1572-1637), among others. This scene of maidens bathing in the rockpool below is typical of his Gainsborough-inspired interpretations of the 'mermaid's haunt', where mythical classical beauties abound in an accurate topographical setting. As with many of his paintings of Scotland completed some years after his time there, as with the present example, the contrasts are well done, with dense woods fringing a deep ravine and pink figures against a shaded pool. Hawthornden remained in the Drummond family until the 1970s, and in the following decade was sold to Drue Heinz, who restored the castle and turned it into a literary retreat.