JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A view on the River Thames off Erith, with a Royal Navy frigate under sail

WILLIAM ANDERSON

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REF: 374890

Description

WILLIAM ANDERSON1757-1837English SchoolA view on the River Thames off Erith, with a Royal Navy frigate under sailOil on canvas80.5 x 112.4 cms315/8 x 44¼ insOverall framed size 96.2 x 127.6 cms 377/8 x 50¼ ins M H Grant, writing in The Old English Landscape Painters Vol IV, says of William Anderson that: “He is assuredly one of the most delightful of our Little Masters. Immaculate paint, drawing clean and clear, a real ‘sweetness and amenity’ of colouring and handling, a charmingly old-world choice of and treatment of subject. All this, added to handy and portable dimensions of his normal panel or canvas, characterises the oeuvre of William Anderson.” William Anderson was born in Scotland and started employment as a shipwright in the Clyde shipyards. He came to London in 1787 with the intention of earning his livelihood as a marine draughtsman and lived at addresses in Lisson Grove and St. John’s Wood among others. He clearly had an eye for detail and a natural ability to delineate ships but he does not seem to have had any formal instruction in paintings. However, he was known to spend a considerable amount of time working at paintings and an observation was made by Edward Dayes, the watercolour painter and engraver that “…he employed his leisure hours in the art of painting.” His aptitude was remarkable for he soon forsook the dividers and rulers of his paid employment to set himself up as a marine painter, becoming one of the very best of that genre of painting. Anderson was influenced by the Dutch Golden Age painters of the 17th century and his most characteristic work has an airy quality and a distinctive sense of colour that is soft and redolent of the great Dutch painter Jan van de Capelle. This aptitude translates perfectly when utilised in his best work which portrays ships in light airs and he was meticulous in his preparation for each work. One of his sketchbooks, probably from the years 1792-4, which is now in the collection of London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, is full of drawings in pencil and ink with depictions of merchant vessels and the careful delineation of the rigging, stern sections, prows and figureheads demonstrates his keen acuity for detail. He exhibited his first work, A view on the Thames, at the Royal Academy when he was thirty years old and this was the start of a long association with both subject matter and exhibition venue as he showed at the R.A. a further 44 works, the last being a major work in 1834 with Lord Howe’s Fleet off Spithead. The Thames formed a significant inspiration for his paintings throughout his career with examples of titles including several just entered in exhibitions as View on the Thames but others that were much more specific such as: Shipping on the Thames at Deptford; View of Billingsgate at High Water; View of East Lane Stairs, Bermondsey; Scene on the Thames near Battersea; Troops embarking near Greenwich and Limehouse Reach. Occasionally, Anderson departed from marine painting and showed a landscape such as A woody scene with Gypsies and A view from ...

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