JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A British Three Deck Man o` War off the Coast

THOMAS WHITCOMBE

Sold



REF: 138750

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Description

London, England

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THOMAS WHITCOMBEc. 1763-1824English School A British Three Deck Man o` War off the CoastOil on canvas, signed and dated 179*43.3 x 41.6 cms171/8 x 163/8 inches
Described by Grant as "a noted marine painter", this prolific and dedicated marine artist produced a body of work that was on the borderline between marine paintings of ships and ship portraits. He became one of the well-known artists from the golden age of British marine painting, which included such others as Peter Monamy, Francis Holman, Nicholas Pocock and Thomas Luny. E H H Archibald places him in the top three of great marine artists of that period.

Thomas Whitcombe's birthdate in London is given as between 1752 and 19th May, 1763, the latter date being usually accepted. Little is known of his background and training, apart from the paintings that he has left of many and varied locations.

In 1787 he was in Bristol and later travelled to the South Coast and there are few ports or harbours from this region that did not provide the setting for a ship portrait or some exciting incident. In 1789 he was touring Wales and in 1813 he went to Devon painting views around Plymouth harbour. During his career he also painted scenes showing the Cape of Good Hope, Madeira, Cuba and the Horn.

His range of work embraced naval engagements, ship portraits, coastal scenes with shipping and ships at sea in fresh breezes and storms. The topography of the background is interesting and well observed and the depiction of the ships themselves detailed and technically very correct, a legacy of time spent in dockyards studying the subject matter. The backgrounds are delightfully atmospheric and, like many British marine artists of the 18th and 19th century, Whitcombe favoured a dark foreground.

It is in terms of naval history that is probably Whitcombe's most important and enduring legacy. He produced fifty paintings for the "Naval Achievements of Great Britain" which was published after the Napoleonic Wars and in addition, also produced over one hundred more paintings for the purpose of being subsequently engraved. Archibald says of this achievement "…eminent artist…nobody contributed more to recording the naval side of the French Revolutionary Wars than Thomas Whitcombe.

Whitcombe exhibited at the Royal Academy 56 times between 1783 and 1824 and once each at the British Institute and the Royal Society of British Artists.

He lived in London during his exhibiting career at addresses in Covent Garden and Somers Town, among others. Some exhibited titles include:" Destruction of the Spanish floating batteries at Gibraltar, September 13, 1782 at night", "East Indiaman off the Coast of Good Hope", "The Victory sailing out of Portsmouth Harbour", "The Trinity Yacht with a view of the light houses on the Caskets".

The National Maritime Museum has 29 of his works, the Tate and National Gallery one each and the National Library of Australia 8.

His date of death, like that of his birth, is uncertain; it was certainly after 1824, the National Maritime Museum says 1834.

Bibliography:

Dictionary of Sea Painters - E H H Archibald

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