JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

Avonmouth and the Severn from Durdham Down

AMBROSE BOWDEN JOHNS

£ POA



REF: 374844

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Description

London, England

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AMBROSE BOWDEN JOHNS English School1776-1858Avonmouth and the Severn from Durdham DownOil on canvas61 x 49.7 cms24 x 19 1/2 inchesOverall framed size 91.5 x 120.2 cms 361/16 x 473/8 insProvenance: With Pawsey and Payne, London

Ambrose Bowden Johns was born in Plymouth in 1776 but little is known of him before he was apprenticed to the well-to-do Wimpole St based printer and publisher Benjamin Haydon. The former had little inclination to have a career in printing, a sentiment shared apparently with Haydon himself who had wanted to join the military but had to go into his father's business.Johns had been encouraged by the Plymouth portrait, historical and animal painter James Northcote (1746-1831) to follow his calling and become a landscape painter and his association with Northcote and other local artists such as Sir Charles Lock Eastlake enabled his artistic development. He was also close to his erstwhile employer's son, Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846) who became a significant painter of large-scale historical and genre paintings.J M W Turner travelled to the West Country three times between 1811 and 1814 and the Tate holds the six sketchbooks from those trips. It has been suggested that Turner first met Johns in 1811 and the local artist, together with others, played a significant role both artistically and socially in Turner's time in south Devon. Indeed, Turner stayed with Johns in the cottage that the latter had built himself and they sketched together forming a friendship and artistic bond. Turner, who was even at that time known as "The Great", was renowned for travelling with insufficient equipment to undertake all the studies that he hoped to accomplish. Eastlake wrote that Johns "…fitted up a small, portable painting box, containing some prepared paper for oil sketches, as well as the other necessary materials. When Turner halted at a scene and seemed inclined to sketch it, Johns produced the inviting box, and the great artist, finding everything ready to his hand, immediately began to work. As he sometimes wanted assistance in the use of the box, the presence of Johns was indispensable… Johns accompanied him always. When Turner left Plymouth he carried off all the results. We had reckoned that Johns, who has provided all the materials, and had waited upon him devotedly, would at least have a present or two of the sketches. This was not the case; but long afterwards the great painter sent Johns in a letter a small oil sketch, not painted from Nature, as a return for his kindness and assistance."A B Johns' paintings depict almost entirely Devon views and in these works one can discern a keen acuity and sympathy for the local environment. His influences are Turner, Richard Wilson, Gaspard Dughet and the great "painter of air" Claude Gellée. The close association with Turner can be seen in Johns' paintings, so much so that when a painting by Johns, owned by the art critic Samuel Carter Hall, was engraved by J Cousen and then published, it was erroneously ascribed to Turner and despite a printed newspaper apo...

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