JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

"The Battle of Trafalgar"

JOHN THOMAS SERRES

Sold



REF: 323610

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Description

London, England

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JOHN THOMAS SERRES 1759-1825English School “The Battle of Trafalgar” Oil on canvas, signed and dated 1824, inscribed on label on reverse 76.2 x 106.7 cms30 x 42 inchesOverall framed size 93 x 124 cms 365/8 x 48¾ ins Exhibited: British Institution 1825 No. 207

"About 3 o'clock p.m., many of the Enemy's ships, having struck their colours, their line gave way. Admiral Gravina, with 10 ships, joining their frigate to leeward, stood towards Cadiz. The five headmost of their van tacked, and, standing to the southward, to the windward of the British line, were engaged and the sternmost taken; the others went off, leaving to H.M.'s Squadron 19 ships-of-the-line (of which two are first rates), the Santissima Trinidade and Santa Ana, with three flag officers, viz. Admiral Villeneuve, the Commander-in-Chef, Don Ignatio Maria d'Alava, Vice-Admiral, and the Spanish Rear-Admiral, Don Balthazar Cisneros." Admiral Collingwood.

John Thomas Serres was a noted painter of sea and shipping, marine battles and landscapes who achieved considerable professional success in his lifetime.

He was born in London in December 1759 and was the elder son of the Marine Artist to George III, Dominic Serres. The latter had been born to a good family near Auch in Gascony and to escape his family's intentions of his joining the priesthood, had run away to sea. His ship had been captured by the English, possibly at the end of the War of Austrian Succession (1741-48). He spoke English well and quickly established himself as a marine painter, aided by his friendship with Charles Brooking. With his charming manner and marked artistic ability, he became a significant painter of marines and was a founder member of the Royal Academy in 1768.

The Seven Years War (1756-1763) aroused much interest in the English public with the ensuing demand for paintings which depicted current scenes and events and Serres Snr was ideally placed to satisfy this demand, not only through paintings but also by entering a joint venture with print makers. This artistic talent and business acumen he passed on to his sons John Thomas and Dominic the Younger and both were taught by him. However, apart from the three members of the Serres family mentioned so far, this remarkable family comprised ten painters in all and included, Miss A.E., Miss H and Miss Joanna among others.

When John Thomas reached the age of twenty, he joined the Maritime School based in Chelsea as Drawing Master. This new establishment was founded in 1777 by the international traveller and merchant Jonas Hanway who used his fortune to provide for charitable causes. The base was in Ormonde House, Paradise Row and had a fully-rigged vessel in the garden for eleven year old boys to gain expertise in rigging and masts to provide sufficient training for them to enter the navy as midshipmen. Drawing was seen as a required skill of all naval cadets at that time and Serres' annual salary of £50 was a substantial income and reflected the importance of the post....

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