

## DRAWINGS & WATERCOLOURS: FROM THE IOLO WILLIAMS COLLECTION



Lot 17

WILLIAM PAYNE (BRITISH c.1755-1830)

The Waterfall on the Clydock, about six miles from Abergavenny  
inscribed on reverse

watercolour

£800 - £1200

A sale of **British 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century drawings and watercolours** once belonging to Iolo Williams (1890-1962), connoisseur and author of the definitive collector's guide *Early English Watercolours*, will take place at Olympia Auctions London on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2024.

The 350 works with estimates ranging from £150 - £1,500 were inherited by Williams' grandson and have been kept safely – in storage boxes under a bed – for nearly half a century. This will be their first appearance on the market for more than 60 years and in some cases much longer.

Iolo Williams was a museums and art critic for *The Times* from 1936 onwards and an avid collector. Born in Middlesbrough, he lived in Hindhead in his youth and latterly in Kew, south-west of London, and formed his collection from the 1930's to the 1950's when unidentified drawings could be picked up for a modest price from dealers and auctions. Through diligent research, he identified many works as being by leading exponents of the golden age of British drawings and watercolours: artists such as

Thomas Girtin, Richard Wilson, William Payne, John Varley and Paul Sandby. He also discovered and put on record other artists about whom little was then known.

In 1952 he published his monumental and highly influential work *Early English Water-Colours, and Some Cognate Drawings by Artists Born Not Later Than 1785* which listed and discussed works by 600 British draughtsmen. Arts writer Huon Mallalieu, in his own essential book for collectors *Understanding Watercolours* of 1985, describes it as “both a labour of love and scholarship undertaken by one of the most civilised and knowledgeable collectors of his day, it gradually became not only essential reading, but a collector’s item in its own right for cognoscenti” and “a joy to read”.

The auction is a rare opportunity for collectors, both seasoned and new, to enjoy the sort of experience Williams would have had of looking through folders of mixed, unframed drawings and watercolours in which hidden gems could be discovered.

Almost all works are in good original condition and bear Williams’s inscriptions on the back often recording where and when they were acquired and his thoughts on attribution. Some were given to him by Leonard Gordon Duke C.B.E. (1890-1971), one of the greatest collectors of British drawings and watercolours and a close friend.

Amongst the earliest works are examples by the Rev. William Gilpin (1724-1804) and Dr. Thomas Monro (1759-1833) whose protégés included Girtin and Turner. Other early examples include works by or attributed to Paul Sandby (1725-1809), Bernard Lens II, Dr William Crotch (1775-1847), John White Abbott (1763-1851) John Baptist Malchair (1731-1812) and William Payne (1755-1830).

There are interesting topographical views of Malaysia by Thomas Sunderland (1744-1823); Kahalgaon, formerly known as Colgong during the British rule, in the state of Biha, India by Thomas Daniell R.A. (1749-1840) and a drawing of a Soothsayer and Sepoy or infantryman in uniform of the Mughal Empire, Madras attributed to William Daniell R.A. (1769-1837).



Lot 44  
ATTRIBUTED TO SIR ROBERT KER PORTER  
(SCOTTISH 1777-1842)  
The Great Lavra Belltower of the Kiev Monastery  
of the Caves  
inscribed in Cyrillic and dated 22 Jul 1808  
upper edge and Kiev verso  
pen and ink and watercolour on two sheets  
(one of ten)  
£400 - £600

There is also a view (that can still be seen today) of The Great Lavra Belltower of the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves attributed to Sir Robert Ker Porter. (Lot 44) The bell tower was the highest free-standing bell tower at the time of its construction and is still one of the most impressive buildings of the Kyiv skyline. Porter was a Scottish artist appointed historical painter at the court of Tsar Alexander I of Russia in 1805, commissioned to paint the Admiralty Hall in St Petersburg with vast historical paintings.



Lot 11  
AGOSTINO AGLIO  
(ITALIAN 1777-1857)  
Collier Ships, Brighton circa 1830  
black chalk and watercolour  
(one of two)  
£300 - £500



Lot 87  
GEORGE MOUTARD WOODWARD  
(BRITISH 1760-1809)  
Fashionable Amusements for Young Ladies  
pen and ink and watercolour  
(one of eight caricatures, each signed & inscribed)  
£1,000 - £1,500

Figurative works include portraits by George Dance (1741-1825), Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808) and a wonderful collection of caricatures by George 'Moutard' Woodward (1760-1809).

Marine subjects include examples by Dominic Serres (1722-1793) and Agostino Aglio (1777-1857). Architectural views are included by Joseph Farington (1747-1821) and Robert Adam (1728-1792).

Allegorical subjects include works by Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), Richard Cosway (1742-1821), Henry Howard (1769-1847), George Frederick Watts (1817-1847) and Edward Edwards (1738-1806).



Lot 53  
ATTRIBUTED TO GEORGE BECK  
(BRITISH-AMERICAN 1749-1812)  
Castle Rising, Norfolk  
signed and inscribed, *Castle Rising, Norfolk / by Mr Beck*, verso  
pen and brown ink and watercolour  
£800 - £1200

A rare view inscribed *Castle rising, Norfolk by Mr Beck* is attributed to British-American artist George Beck (1775-1863) who was born in Staffordshire but emigrated to America in 1795. There, his best-known paintings *The Potomac River Breaking through the Blue Ridge* and *The Great Falls of the Potomac* were purchased by George Washington in 1797 to be hung in the New Room that Washington had built at Mount Vernon following the Revolutionary War. (Lot 53).

In 1960, Iolo Williams donated 24 drawings to the British Museum and gave 65 more upon his death leading to an exhibition of his bequest in November 1962. He also gave four drawings by Richard Wilson to the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven.

The rest of the collection was divided between his three children, and then by descent to his grandson Richard Keene, who hopes that collectors will not only appreciate Iolo's passion and detailed research but will, like him, use its treasures to inspire a new generation of collectors.

An obituary in *The Times* is a reminder that in addition to being "especially remembered" for his *Early English Watercolours*, Williams was known for his studies of 18<sup>th</sup> century English bibliography and verse and as botanist, ornithologist and literary critic who was also interested in folk songs and a champion of Welsh language and culture. "The pleasures of the chase and discovery were transferred from field and hedgerow to shops and portfolios...the impulse was not merely the stamp-collector's search for rare specimens: he had a simple and direct interest in the more human aspects of the drawings, especially that of representation..."

The obituary describes him as "a tall, stooping, scholarly figure...careless of appearances and distinguished without conscious effort". It continues "He moved as easily in conversation (and he was a gifted talker and listener) from Edwardian to up-to-date topics and he never gave the slightest impression of having aged in spirit."

Suzanne Zack of Olympia Auctions said: "Williams' meticulous research and passion for British art leaves an enduring legacy. He will always be recognised as a pivotal figure in the appreciation and study of early British watercolours and drawings and it has been a privilege to handle this rare collection, straight from the family and otherwise unseen for more than half a century."

*The sale can be viewed online from 4<sup>th</sup> September and in person from Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September with an evening view on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September.*

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## **Editor's Notes**

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