JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

East Indiaman off the coast

THOMAS LUNY

Sold

London, England

+44 (0) 20 8748 1747

REF: 157580

Description

THOMAS LUNY1759-1837English SchoolEast Indiaman off the coastOil on canvas, signed and dated 178360 x 101 cms23 5/8 x 39 3/4 inches

Described as "one of the leading figures in the third generation of British marine painters" by Wilson and "one of our leading painters of the sea and shipping" by Grant, this artist was born in London in 1759.

His first exhibited in 1777 when he was still only eighteen years old and the two paintings were shown at Society of Artists under the titles of: "A Sunset with a view of Westminster, from the Surrey side" and "A distant view of the Island of Madeira and Porto Santo". In both instances, the address of the exhibitor says 'At Mr Holman's, St George's Middlesex'. The only inference that can be drawn from this is that Luny was the assistant and pupil of the eminent marine painter Francis Holman, possibly remaining so until the former's address changes in 1781 to Ratcliffe Highway in Stepney. The influence of Holman is clearly discernible in the pupil's early work, particularly in the treatment of the waves and the low horizon although his palette is warmer and lighter palette.

Luny served in the Navy as a purser under the command of Captain George Tobin R.N. (and they remained good friends after Naval retirement when both lived in Teignmouth) and the fact that Luny ceased exhibiting in the Royal Academy from 1793 until 1802, probably indicates that he served during the instability of the French Revolutionary Wars. His academic instruction under Holman combined with his first-hand experience of Naval life, gave him a thorough knowledge of all things connected with the sea. He applied this familiarity to all his marine subjects whether they be naval engagements or portraits of vessels and his acute observation applied to the sea and the sky as well as the technicalities of the vessels.

He probably left the Navy in 1807 as he recorded in his inventory a couple of views in Teignmouth and two Thames views, of London and Blackfriars Bridges, in that year. His retirement on a pension from the Senior Service had been forced on him by the onset of rheumatoid arthritis. This condition became so severe that he had to resort to a wheelchair and when painting, either had to hold the brush with both hands or else secure it to his wrist. He had moved to Teignmouth where he continued painting assiduously, in spite of being crippled in both hands and legs, producing many coastal scenes and even a few inland and rural scenes, often on quite a small size. He enjoyed the patronage of many retired naval officers and merchant sehip owners and captains. Many of his works were engraved and the Literary Gazette of 1837 gives a description of an exhibition of 130 his works held in Old Bond Street, London. It is probably not coincidental that he should choose to exhibit three paintings in the Royal Academy that same year after a gap of thirty-five years since he had last shown there.

Thomas Luny had a considerable output with an astonishing number of over 2,200 entries in his inventory between February 1807 and December 1835 alone and this while struggling with his disability.

He exhibited a total of 35 paintings from 1777 onwa...

London, England

+44 (0) 20 8748 1747