JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A Dark Bay Hunter standing in a Landscape held by a Groom

THOMAS GOOCH

Sold

London, England

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REF: 374779

Height: 63.5 cm (25")

Width: 89.5 cm (35.2")

Description

1750 - 1802
English School

Oil on canvas

Ex Collection: Lord and Lady Norton, Fillongley Hall, Warwickshire

Thomas Gooch was a London based painter principally of horses but also of cattle, dogs, shooting scenes and coaches, the latter often in very accurately depicted scenes of old London.

Surprisingly little is known of the life of this highly talented artist although he was almost certainly a pupil of the important equestrian painter Sawrey Gilpin as Gooch's address was given as "At Mr Glipin's, Knightsbridge, or at his house in Brompton Road" on the paintings that Gooch sent to London Exhibitions until the early 1780's.

Much of his work was horse portraiture but he was sometimes drawn to the humorous, ("The Famous Ox who won a Race of nearly Two Miles in Eight Minutes") or included a moral theme to his paintings. The series of paintings entitled "The Life of a Racehorse" made him the first to promote a reforming message and their exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1783 was well enough received for him to engrave them in aquatint and publish them in 1790. They were re-issued in 1792 with an essay by Dr Hawksworth: "To excite a benevolent conduct to the Brute Creation". They were remarkable in that they were the first to display human emotions in sporting scenes and consequently Gooch was a marked influence on Sir Edwin Landseer and other later Victorian animal painters.

By 1784, Gooch had moved into accommodation of his own, firstly Half Moon Street then Chapel Street in Mayfair and from there to Paddington. In 1800 he was living in Brandean near Alresford in Hampshire and was suffering from a paralytic stroke which affected his right hand. He died in Lyndhurst in 1802.

Thomas Gooch had some fashionable clients, particularly in the early 1780's and the painting at the Yale Center for British Art is a good example. He exhibited extensively: four at the Society of Artists, one at the Free Society and seventy-six at the Royal Academy. These had titles such as: "Portraits of Horses and Dogs belonging to the Hon. Mr. Pitt", "Portrait of a Gentleman on Horseback with his Gamekeeper and Pointers", "Portrait of a Lady on a remarkable Trotting Mare", "Breaking in the young Coach-horse", "Sir William Clayton with Groom and Hunter" and "The Progress of the Riding School".

Despite this output, comparatively few works of his seem to have survived. Ellis Waterhouse says of him: "Gooch was one of the most competent sporting painters until the emergence of Ben Marshall" and Sally Mitchell writes: "He was an artist of outstanding ability, his horses having a slightly naïve charm but nevertheless very well executed as are his human figures. His landscapes are soft and classical and his composition always interesting".

Bibliography:
The Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists, Sally Mitchell
Dictionary of British Landscape Painters - M H Grant

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