



Five Centuries: Furniture, Paintings & Works of Art (627)

Wed, 18th Nov 2020, Live Online | Viewing in Edinburgh

Viewing Times:

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Lot 223

Estimate: £15000 - £20000 + Fees

JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY (BRITISH 1734-1797) PORTRAIT OF HENRY FLINT (MAYOR OF DERBY IN 1770 AND 1786)

oil on canvas

74cm x 61cm (29in x 24in)

Provenance: Sale Sothebys 22nd May 1957 (150); Mrs Arthur Barber (1958); Richard Roberts (1959); Maurice Quick (1963); Sale Christies, 22nd November 1963 (70); Cyril P Plant; D.R Sherborn Esq F.S.A, By decent. Private Collection

Literature: Benedict Nicholson catalogue Raisonne of Joseph Wright of Derby pp 68-9, 73 **196**. Dateable on stylistic ground to c 1778-80.

Note: Joseph Wright is one of the most successful artists of the Age of Enlightenment, known primarily for his atmospheric paintings using chiaroscuro in order to emphasise the contrast of light and dark. Born to a prosperous family in Derby on 3rd September 1734, Wright moved to London in 1751 with ambitions of becoming a painter. For two years, he studied under the portrait painter Thomas Hudson, who also counted Joseph van Aken and Joshua Reynolds amongst his students. Wright then returned to Derby, and besides some notable periods away such as Liverpool from 1768 to 1771 and Italy from 1773 to 1775, he always found himself called back to his hometown, where he lived until his death in 1797.

Wright made a name for himself through his exceptional skill at painting dramatic light, often linked to his connections to Enlightenment figures such as Josiah Wedgwood and Erasmus Darwin. His work, such as *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, currently in the National Gallery in London, is an excellent example of his engagement with modern technology and his skill at employing artificial light. Although most well known for using this technique in portraits and paintings of modern life, it is visible in much of his work.

While in Derby, Wright painted portraits of numerous prosperous residents, such as the current portrait of Henry Flint who was Mayor of Derby twice in 1770 and 1786. Similar portraits of mayors are currently held in the Derby Museums collection, for example his 1789 portrait of Isaac Borrow who was twice the Mayor of the city.

The enduring appeal of works by Joseph Wright of Derby is visible in the fact that they are held in numerous important private collections and public institutions worldwide such as the National Gallery in London, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, and the Museum of Fine Art in Boston.