

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Peter DE WINT (Hanley 1784 - London 1849)

Still Life with a Bottle, a Jug and a Napkin

Brush and brown wash and watercolour, over traces of an underdrawing in pencil, on buff paper.

Inscribed and dated 7 A 1847 at the upper left.

Further dated 1847 on the verso.

225 x 186 mm. (8 7/8 x 7 3/8 in.)

Peter De Wint's relatively rare still life subjects – usually comprised of jugs and bottles of the sort found in a country kitchen - are often difficult to date. While they have generally been regarded as youthful works from early in his career, the present sheet, which is dated 1847, suggests that the artist continued to engage in the practice of still life painting almost until the end of his life. It has also been suggested that some of the artist's still life subjects may have been done as exemplars for his students. As one of his pupils, John Mayer Heathcote, described De Wint's method of composing still life compositions to an early biographer, 'He would take any convenient objects he could find in the room and set them in a group on the table, with a towel or other white cloth carelessly thrown against them.'

As a modern scholar has noted of De Wint, 'His still-lives, which, like his penchant for the panoramic landscape, suggest his Dutch ancestry, are among his most accomplished works...they appear to have been done largely for his own satisfaction, or as teaching studies, as no such subjects appear among his exhibited works, nor are any included in his wife's list of sold works, except for those sold to the Royal Dublin Society [in 1843] for the use of their students.' Furthermore, as has been noted elsewhere, 'De Wint's still life compositions, which generally feature jugs, bottles and pails that might be found in a simple country kitchen, have a unique place in the history of early nineteenth century English watercolour painting.'

The present sheet was one of a number of fine works by Peter De Wint in the collection of the art dealer Cyril Fry (1918-2010).

Exhibitions

Norwich, University of East Anglia, Library Concourse, English Watercolours and Drawings of the 18th and 19th Centuries, 1970; Arts Council of Great Britain, Peter De Wint, no.35 [date and location unknown]; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Drawings & Watercolours by Peter De Wint, 1979, no.35; London, Fry Gallery and Brighton, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Peter de Wint (1784–1849): Bicentenary Loan Exhibition, 1984-1985, no.79; Sudbury, Gainsborough's House, A Peculiarly English Art: English Drawings and Watercolours, 1994, no.12.

Literature:

Martin Hardie, Water-colour Painting in Britain, Vol.II: The Romantic Period, London, 1967, pl.206; David Scrase, Drawings & Watercolours by Peter De Wint, exhibition catalogue, Cambridge, 1979, p.15, no.35, illustrated pl.20; Hammond Smith, Peter DeWint 1784-1849, London, 1982, p.70, illustrated p.80, fig.77.

Artist description:

The son of a Staffordshire physician, Peter De Wint was trained in the London studio of the portrait painter and engraver John Raphael Smith. There he met the young artist William Hilton from Lincoln, who was to become a lifelong friend, as well as his brother-in-law. Released from his apprenticeship in 1806, De Wint studied briefly with the landscape artist John Varley but in general seems to have begun his independent career without further training. He exhibited landscape paintings and watercolours at the Royal Academy, the British Institution, the Associated Artists in Water Colours and, in particular, the Old Water Colour Society, where he showed almost yearly between 1810 and his death. His work soon found favour with critics, and he began to establish a particular reputation, with regular sales to a large number of devoted patrons and collectors of his work. De Wint undertook sketching tours throughout England and Wales, with a particular fondness for his native Lincolnshire, as well as Derbyshire, Yorkshire and the Lake District. (He never seems to have had much desire to travel abroad, however, and his only foreign tour was a brief visit to Normandy in 1828.) Among his favourite subjects were rivers and streams, harvest scenes and pastoral views. De Wint also produced a significant number of topographical landscape prints, many of which were published in book form. The artist died in 1849, at the age of sixty-six. Writing some seventy years later, a fellow watercolourist noted that 'No artist ever came nearer to painting a perfect picture than did Peter DeWint. His sense of colour was more brilliant, his choice of subject matter more apt, and his judgment as to the exact time when a picture should be left, better than any of his contemporaries.'

As Andrew Wilton has written of the artist, 'De Wint's work is characterised by a warm range of browns and greens that obviously derives from [Thomas] Girtin; later, he varied this with touches of unmixed red or blue. But he did not make the study of climate a priority. His chief concern remained the creation of subtle and beautifully articulated compositions based on stretches of open or wooded country, often in the broad Wolds of his own Lincolnshire...When well preserved, his watercolours often display fine atmospheric effects.'