NOTABLE SALES TO PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

AUGUST 22, 2024



The Limner Company recently celebrated its first anniversary, and it’s with great pleasure that we can announce some notable sales from our first year.

Last Spring, Emma Rutherford identified the sitter of the portrait miniature by John Smart (1741-1811) pictured below as Sir Rowland Winn, 5th baronet of Nostell (1739-1785) - the discovery story was documented in the blog, 'Finding Sir Rowland'. Research into the sitter revealed that he was largely responsible for 'one of the great treasure houses of the north of England', Nostell Priory in Yorkshire (now National Trust). Having inherited Nostell in 1765, Sir Rowland and his wife, Swiss heiress Sabine d'Hervart, picked up the project with vigour, employing not only the most fashionable architect Robert Adam, but leading craftsmen such as Thomas Chippendale and Joseph Rose. It's therefore fitting that the miniature has now returned to Nostell, nestled among the many other Georgian treasures.



Left: Portrait miniature of Sir Rowland Winn, 5th Bt (1739-1785), dated 1767, John Smart (1741-1811) - sold by The Limner Company to the National Trust in 2023. Centre: Nostell Priory and Parkland, West Yorkshire. Right: Detail of the Top Hall at Nostell Priory and Parkland, West Yorkshire. | © National Trust Images/Chris Lacey.

Another intriguing discovery came about last autumn, when Emma identified a lost portrait from a series in the Royal Collection. This endearing drawing [pictured below top left] depicts Frederick William Blomberg, D.D. (1761-1847), who was adopted by Queen Charlotte in 1765. The portrait was sold at auction with the artist unknown, but Emma's research revealed it to be one of a set dating to June 1769 by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1739-1808), said to have been commissioned by George III. The six other portraits from the series depict the King and Queen and their four sons: George, Prince of Wales; Frederick, Duke of York; William, Duke of Clarence and Edward Duke of Kent.



Top left: The Reverend Frederick William Blomberg, D.D. (1761-1847), as a child; dated 1769; Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1739-1808) - sold by The Limner Company to the Royal Collection Trust in 2023. Top centre, top right and bottom row, left to right: William, Duke of Clarence (1765-1837); Edward, Duke of Kent (1767-1820); Frederick, Duke of York (1763-1827); George, Prince of Wales (1762-1830); George III (1738-1820); by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1739-1808) - Royal Collection Trust.

Quite aside from the exciting discovery, Blomberg's mysterious life story deserved a dedicated blog post, 'A Cuckoo in the Royal Nest; who was Frederick William Blomberg?'. Whether Blomberg was an orphan or the illegitimate child of George III, he was raised in the royal nurseries alongside the future King George IV (1762-1830). Perhaps indicative of Blomberg's position, his portrait seems to have been kept by the sitter while the rest remained in the Royal Collection - until late last year that is, when it returned back into the royal fold after being acquired by the Royal Collection Trust.



Portrait drawing of an unknown Gentleman, possibly Michael Rosse (d.c. 1735); circa 1675; Richard Gibson (c.1605-1690) - recently acquired by a public institution.

Most recently, this drawing was offered by The Limner Company at London Art Week 2024, where it was acquired by another public institution (to be announced in due course). Thought to depict the artist, Richard Gibson's (c.1605-1690) son in law, Michael Rosse (d.c.1735), and husband to the artist Susannah-Penelope Rosse (née Gibson) (c.1655-1700), it survived in group of personal drawings depicting close friends and members of the family. The group of drawings indicates the devoted and interconnected relationships of artists living and working in the same sphere.