



Original watercolour drawing, pencil, pen and black ink and watercolour wash on paper.

## **A BOOK AUCTION BY THE 'COLCHESTER HOGARTH'**

**[A Book Auction].**

### **Author**

[DUNTHORNE, James junior]

### **Publication date**

c1787].

### **Publisher**

### **Publication place**

[London or Colchester,

### **Physical description**

Original watercolour drawing, pencil, pen and black ink and watercolour wash on paper.

### **Dimensions**

360 by 540mm. (14.25 by 21.25 inches).

### **Notes**

A charming scene of a book auction, possibly held at Sotheby's, or Leigh & Sotheby as it was at the time. The room is dominated by a great bookcase, from which books are being hand-picked by a young porter up a ladder. The crowd is fashionably dressed and caught in a variety of poses, such as greeting each other and conversing, eyeing the bidder in the back of the room, checking the catalogue, and perusing one of the recent purchases, as the seated lady in the middle is doing. The smiling auctioneer is about to knock down his gavel, and the scribe below intent in recording the

sale.

The drawing was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1787 and was marked as 'for sale'. It is the work of James Dunthorne junior (c1758-1794), an artist from Colchester, his father also a painter mostly of portraiture and miniature works, who worked as a mapmaker and surveyor on the side.

Dunthorne junior ran a print shop on Colchester High Street, and exhibited fourteen works at the Royal Academy between 1783 and 1792, with the exception of four years (1785, 1786, 1788, 1789). His favoured themes were mostly genre and domestic subjects, and a number of his drawings were engraved by the artist and caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson, thus showing that Dunthorne junior had some reputation as an artist (Benham). Some of his works include 'Private Card Party', showing a fashionable party of Colchester elite, 'Morning Concert', 'Skating', 'A bath shop', and 'The Pieman'. The lack of works recorded after 1792 and the darker nature of part of his oeuvre, such as 'Ague & Fever' and 'The Hypochondriac', suggest that Dunthorne junior's health was poor in the early 1790s. A benefit concert was held in his honour on 30 July 1793 and his drawings, prints, music etc. were sold on 16 August 1794. He eventually passed away 'after a long affliction' on 12 October of the same year. Dubbed the 'Colchester Hogarth', his legacy has allowed historians to catch a glimpse of society in a secondary Georgian town.

A number of engravings based on drawings by James Dunthorne junior are held in institutions world-wide. We are unaware of any other of his drawings offered for sale.

### **Bibliography**

W. G. Benham, 'The Dunthornes of Colchester', *Essex Review*, 10, 1901, pp. 27-35; Shani D'Cruze, 'A Pleasing Prospect: Society and Culture in Eighteenth-century Colchester', 2008.

### **Provenance**

Exhibited:

London, Royal Academy, 1787, no. 532.

**Price:** £35000

**Inventory reference:** 15137