



Mezzotint.

NORTHCOTE'S STRIKING PRINT OF THE TIGER

Tyger.

Author

NORTHCOTE, J[ames]; and John MURPHY

Publication date

May 1, 1790.

Publisher

John & Josiah Boydell, Cheapside, & at the Shakespeare Gallery Pall Mall,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Mezzotint.

Dimensions

490 by 610mm (19.25 by 24 inches).

Notes

Northcote's prowling tiger, with the head of a dead wolf to the right, was engraved by John Murphy (1755-c1817). The tiger's "stance and mask-like face suggest we are to be his next prey. Conceived during the opening years of the French Revolution, the image may be read as a metaphor warning Britons against the dangerous political forces on the loose across the Channel" (the Met online).

James Northcote (1746-1831), born in Plymouth he was apprenticed at an early age to his father who was a watchmaker. In his spare time, the young James painted and sketched. In 1769, he left his father and set up as a portrait painter; four years later he travelled to London and was admitted as a pupil into the studio and house of Sir Joshua Reynolds. In 1775 he left Reynolds, and about two years later, having made some money by portrait painting back in Devon, he went to study in Italy. On his return to England, three years later, he revisited his native county, then settled in London, where John Opie and Henry Fuseli were his rivals. He was elected associate of the Academy in 1786, and full academician in the following spring.

The range of his output was considerable from history paintings such as the 'Young Princes Murdered in the Tower' (1786), and the 'Death of Wat Tyler' (1787); to genre scenes such as 'The Modest Girl and the Wanton', although he is best remembered for his fine portraits and the natural history paintings. His prodigious output would number about 2000 works and he would amass a not inconsiderable fortune of £40,000.

Bibliography

Dictionary of National Biography, vol. 41, p.190-193, 1895; the Met 37.17.33

Provenance

Price: £10000

Inventory reference: 1059