



Lithograph print, with hand-colour, with hand-coloured lithograph volvelle, loosely held with original brass pin, closely cut at head, mounted on an old album leaf.

A RARE SLY MOVEABLE

A Stiff old File from Waterloo.

Author

SLY, R. E[van]

Publication date

1844.

Publisher

T. Houlston,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Lithograph print, with hand-colour, with hand-coloured lithograph volvelle, loosely held with original brass pin, closely cut at head, mounted on an old album leaf.

Dimensions

275 by 238mm. (10.75 by 9.25 inches).

Notes

Rare and quirky moveable print.

The image lampoons a Waterloo veteran, in the guise of a Chelsea Pensioner, "file" being the old

English term for “fellow”. The wheel of 32 faces are all intended to be ridiculous, grotesque, or amusing. As Wood notes: “through the use of moveable parts, printmakers were able to create visual puns in which the image itself enacted the worldplay and underlined the relationship between text and image”.

Two of the faces in the series are black. Comic prints often included black subjects, to various degrees of racial prejudice. It is hard to judge, in the case of the present example, whether race is intended as the object of ridicule, or age, or a combination. In part, the print may reflect that veterans of the British army did include soldiers of African descent, with nine black soldiers known to have fought at Waterloo (and the true total doubtless more).

Little is known about R. Evan Sly (fl.1839-1847), who produced a handful of revolving prints, under the banner of ‘R. Evan Sly’s New & Amusing Mechanical Prints’. Two examples of another print from this series, ‘Garrick and Hogarth or the Artist Puzzled’, are held by the V&A. He is possibly a relative of engraver and printer Stephen Sly (fl.1828-1847), who operated from the same premises, first in Fleet Street, later Soho.

Rare: we have been unable to trace another example of this volvelle.

Bibliography

Wood, S., “Moving Pictures: Nineteenth century British Mechanical Prints” in *Print Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2 (June, 2017), pp. 162-176.

Provenance

Price: £4000

Inventory reference: 20715