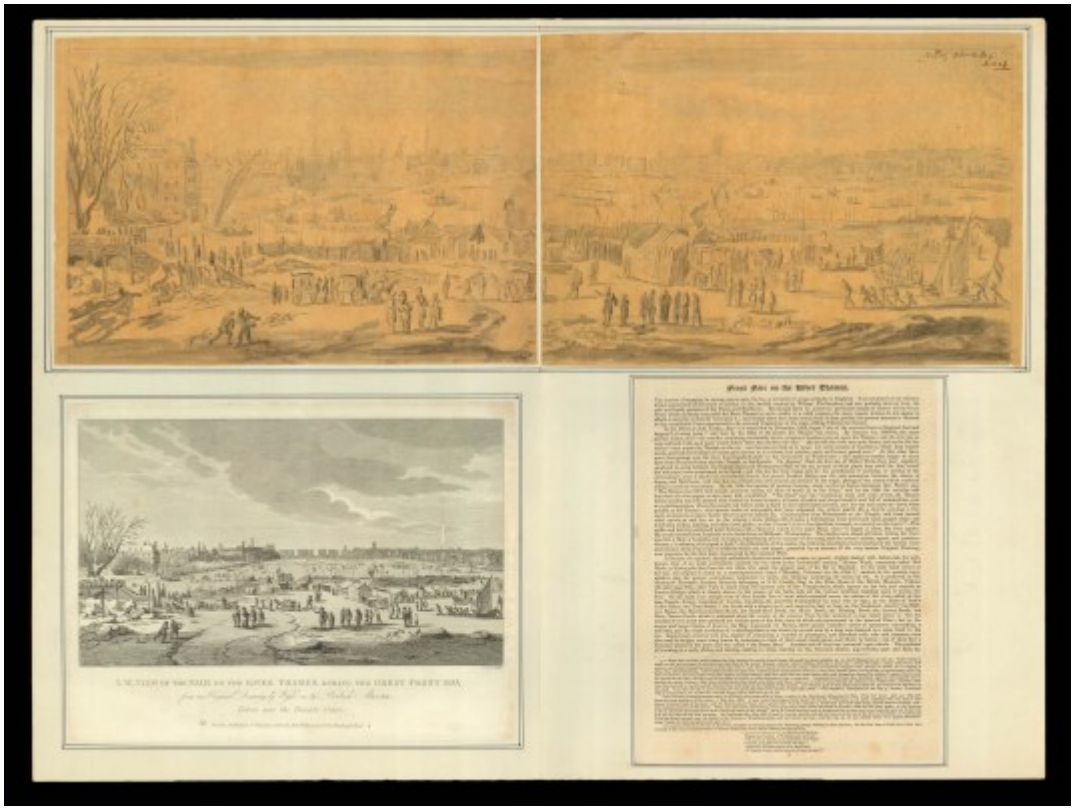


Watercolour and graphite drawing on two sheets of tracing paper; accompanied by Wilkinson’s published engraving; with a partial newspaper article.

AN ICONIC IMAGE OF THE 1683-84 FROST FAIR

N.W. View of the Fair on the River Thames during the Great Frost 1683/4 from an Original Drawing by Wyke in the British Museum. Taken near the Temple Stairs.

Author
STOW, James; after Jan WYCK

Publication date
1st January 1825.

Publisher
Rob.t Wilkinson, No. 125 Fenchurch Street

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Watercolour and graphite drawing on two sheets of tracing paper; accompanied by Wilkinson’s published engraving; with a partial newspaper article.

Dimensions
Watercolour: 247 by 730mm (9.75 by 28.75 inches); engraving: 247 by 730mm

Notes
James Stow’s (1770-1823) preparatory artwork for his engraving of the scene first painted by Jan Wyck and now in the British Museum.

Stow is probably best remembered for his engravings for John Boydell's series illustrating the works of Shakespeare, and Robert Bowyer's edition of David Hume's 'History of England' (1806). But, tragically, "Stow is said to have fallen into intemperate habits, and he died in obscurity and poverty" (Ruth Cohen for DNB).

The River Thames has been known to freeze over on several occasions, especially during the "Little Ice Age" of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, upon which the inhabitants of London took to the solid ice for business and pleasure. The most important of these "Frost Fairs" occurred in 695, 1608, 1683-4, 1716, 1739–40, 1789, and 1814. In 1684, during the Great Freeze of 1683-4, which was the longest in London's history and during which the ice reached depths of around 28cm, the diarist John Evelyn recorded the attractions of the Frost Fair:

"Streetes of Boothes were set upon the Thames… all sorts of Trades and shops furnished, & full of Commodities… Coaches plied from Westminster to the Temple, and from several other stairs too and fro, as in the streets, sleds, sliding with skates, bull-baiting, horse and coach races, puppet plays and interludes, cooks, tippling and other lewd places, so that it seemed to be a bacchanalian triumph, or a carnival on water".

Bibliography
Engraving: BM 1880,0911.1007

Provenance

Price: £12500

Inventory reference: 18173

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