

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

British school, 1723 - 1792

Born at Plympton near Plymouth, where his father was a clergyman and master of the Grammar School, Reynolds was apprenticed at the age of ^{seven} ~~14~~ to the Devonshire portraitist Thomas Hudson, and remained with him until 1743. He then returned to Devon and practised on his own^{ly} as a portraitist until 1749 --apart from a period in London, from 1744-46, during which he won notice with a portrait of Captain John Hamilton. He was influenced at this stage by Ramsay and Hogarth. In 1749 he sailed for Italy with his friend Commodore Keppel, landed in January 1750, and spent the next two and a half years in Rome, coming home through Florence, Parma, Bologna, Venice and Paris. Back in England in 1752, he settled in London early the following year, establishing himself in St Martin's Lane ; and from then on ran a studio with numerous assistants. Later he moved to Great Newport Street, and in 1760 to Leicester Square. Appointed first President of the Royal Academy in 1768, he exhibited regularly there from 1769 and subsequently wrote his Discourses for this audience. In 1769 he was knighted. He travelled to Flanders and Holland in 1781, and his notes from this trip show that he made a special study of Rubens. On the death of Ramsay in 1784 he became Principal Painter to the King. He ceased to paint after 1789, owing to loss of sight in his left eye, and died on February 23, 1792.

Reynolds relied heavily on studio assistants for the large number of portraits which he produced, but he appears unquestionably to have added the final touches to original pictures. Sittings and payments are frequently recorded in his pocket-books and ledgers.

Portrait of Mrs Thomas Watkinson Payler
oil on canvas, 30 x 25 ins.

Provenance

Thomas Watkinson Payler, Heden, Kent ; Egerton Hammond, Nonington, Kent ; Newhouse Galleries, New York. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Literature

A.Graves - W.V.Cronin, A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, 4 vols., London, 1899¹⁹⁰¹, II, p.735; E.K.Waterhouse, Reynolds, London, 1939, p.62

Exhibited

Early British Masters, John Herrron Art Institute, Indianapolis, March-Apr. 1941, no.26, ill. ; Ind., 1959, no.48.

This is the companion portrait to one of Mr Payler (now in the Willits J.Hole collection, University of California, Los Angeles)⁽¹⁾. This man, the son of Thomas Turner of Heden , who changed his name to Payler, was born around 1748 and married in 1771 Charlotte, daughter of William Hammond ; he died in 1816. According to the records published by Graves and Cronin , Mrs Payler sat for the present portrait in May 1771, Mr Payler for his in February 1772, and on June 24, 1771 Reynolds was paid £73 10s for the two works.

Certain areas of the painting, especially the costume, suggest studio assistance.

Notes.

1. Waterhouse, loc.cit. Same dimensions, and set in a painted roundel of the same dimensions as this one. Figure facing three-quarters left. Inscr. bottom right "Mr Payler/Sir Josh.Reynolds". From the colln. of Henry Hammond, St Albans (photo kindly supplied by the Newhouse Galleries).