



Two majestic still life mezzotints after a Dutch Old Master

VAN HUYSUM, Jan.

A Flower Piece. [&] A Fruit Piece. In the Cabinet at Houghton.

London: John Boydell, 1778 & 1781. Pair of mezzotints, each 545 x 420mm.

£3,500

The famous pair of mezzotints engraved by Richard Earlom from paintings by Jan van Huysum now held in the Hermitage, St Petersburg. 'A Flower Piece' has a floral display in a baroque vase decorated with putti, a bird's nest and butterflies, with the artist's signature and the date 1722 on the plinth. 'A Fruit Piece' has a vine branch with grapes, peaches and a pomegranate around a classical plinth with the signature and date 1723. Jan van Huysum (1682-1749) was a Dutch painter who found acclaim for his lavish still lifes, particularly floral arrangements. This pair was bought by Sir Robert Walpole (the first 'Prime Minister') and added to his collection at Houghton Hall, Norfolk. However Walpole's grandson, George, 3rd Earl of Orford, was obliged to sell a large portion of the collection to pay debts. John Wilkes attempted to have the government buy the collection, aided by publisher John Boydell, who started having the collection copied by Joseph Farington for engraving. The government refused, after which this pair were among the 206 painting sold to Catherine the Great, of which 127 are still in the Hermitage. Thus Boydell's series of prints was issued under the title 'A Set of Prints Engraved after the Most Capital Paintings in the Collection of Her Imperial Majesty the Empress of Russia, Lately in the Possession of the Earl of Orford at Houghton in Norfolk'.



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