

Finch & C^o



FINE PAIR OF ENGLISH NEO-CLASSICAL WHITE MARBLE PROFILE PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS OF MR AND MRS BENJMIN GOTT BY JOSEPH GOTT (1786 - 1860)

A FINE PAIR OF ENGLISH NEO-CLASSICAL WHITE MARBLE PROFILE PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS OF MR AND MRS BENJMIN GOTT

BY JOSEPH GOTT (1786 - 1860)

INCISED TO REVERSE 'J GOTT F.T'

CIRCA 1834 - 1838

SIZE: 17.5CM DIA. - 7 INS DIA. (EACH) / 27.5CM DIA. - 10¾ INS DIA. (FRAME)

PROVENANCE: MR AND MRS BENJAMIN GOTT

THENCE BY DESCENT TO MAJOR W.M GOTT OF TRENYTHON HALL, CORNWALL

THENCE BY DESCENT

LITERATURE

JOSEPH GOTT EXECUTED AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS OF THE BENJAMIN GOTT FAMILY. TWENTY FOUR ARE RECORDED IN PLASTER, TERRACOTTA AND MARBLE. THEY WERE HIS MOST OUTSTANDING PATRONS AND HE OWED HIS REPUTATION ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO THEIR INTEREST. BENJAMIN GOTT (1762 - 1840) WAS THE SON OF A CIVIL ENGINEER AND BY 1800 HAD ESTABLISHED A SUCCESSFUL FIRM OF WOOLLEN MANUFACTURERS IN YORKSHIRE. FROM 1792 HE BUILT A VAST COMPLEX OF SPINNING MILLS EQUIPPED WITH STEAM ENGINES SUPPLIED BY HIS FRIEND JAMES WATT. IN 1799 HE WAS MAYOR OF LEEDS. THE COUPLE'S ARTISTIC PATRONAGE SEEMS TO HAVE BEGUN WITH THEIR RESTORATION OF ARMLEY HOUSE. IN 1810 HUMPHREY REPTON LAID OUT THE GROUNDS AND IN 1822 ROBERT SMIRKE COMPLETED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HOUSE WHICH WAS THE FIRST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL GREEK REVIVAL HOUSE IN LEEDS. THEIR SON, BENJAMIN JR. WAS DISPATCHED IN 1817 TO TRAVEL TO ATHENS TO ACQUIRE ANTIQUE MARBLES, BUT UNFORTUNATELY DIED AND SO JOHN FLAXMAN WAS COMMISSIONED TO DESIGN A NEO-CLASSICAL MONUMENT FOR THE ARMLEY CHAPEL, BUT BEFORE HE COULD BEGIN THE PROJECT HE ALSO DIED. THE PROJECT WAS EVENTUALLY UNDERTAKEN BY HIS FORMER PUPIL JOSEPH GOTT.

AT THE AGE OF TWELVE JOSEPH GOTT WAS APPRENTICED TO JOHN FLAXMAN, THEN THE MOST OUTSTANDING NEO-CLASSICAL SCULPTOR IN ENGLAND. IN 1805 HE ENTERED THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY AND WON MEDALS FOR HIS WORK IN 1806 AND 1808. FROM THE OUTSET OF HIS CAREER HE WAS HELPED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY, SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE WHO DURING THE PERIOD 1826 - 28 PAINTED THE PORTRAITS OF BENJAMIN GOTT AND HIS WIFE ELIZABETH. LAWRENCE DECLARED 'THEY ARE TWO OF THE BEST THAT I HAVE EVER PAINTED'. LAWRENCE ENCOURAGED THE FAMILY TO COMMISSION SCULPTURE FROM JOSEPH GOTT WHO WAS BENJAMIN GOTT'S SECOND COUSIN. HIS WORK FOR THE FAMILY OVER THE NEXT FOURTEEN YEARS WAS STRIKING IN ITS QUALITY, DIVERSITY AND QUANTITY; PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS, BUST AND FIGURES, MONUMENTS AND GROUPS OF CHILDREN, ANIMALS ESPECIALLY DOGS, ANCIENT MYTHOLOGY AND EVEN, PUGILISM.

ON JANUARY 24TH 1834 MRS BENJAMIN GOTT RECORDED IN HER DIARY 'MR GOTT SPENT THE DAY HERE AND WORKED ON THE MEDALLIONS'. BY EARLY 1838 SOME OF THEM HAD BEEN SENT TO LEEDS AND IN FEBRUARY GOTT WRITES TO HER HUSBAND 'I AM SHIPPING A CASE Â€|. THE TWO MARBLE MEDALLIONS OF MRS GOTT AND YOURSELF WHICH YOU COMMISSIONED ME TO MAKE FOR YOU WAS FIXED AT THE PRICE OF 15 GUINEAS EACH BEFORE I LEFT LEEDS WHICH I TRUST YOU DO NOT THINK TOO MUCH AS I WOULD MUCH RATHER EXECUTE A BUST IN MARBLE THAN FOUR MEDALLIONSÂ€|.' IN THE PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS JOSEPH GOTT RECORDS THE STRONG DETERMINED PERSONALITIES OF EACH SITTER. THE ELEGANT AND FASHIONABLE HAIRSTYLES ARE RENDERED WITH GREAT DELICACY AND BLEND BRILLIANTLY WITH A LOW RELIEF TECHNIQUE GIVING THEM A NEO-CLASSICAL AIR. IN THE PORTRAITS OF MR AND MRS BENJAMIN GOTT THE FIDELITY OF THE SYMPATHETIC INTERPRETATION IS CONFIRMED BY COMPARISON WITH THEIR PORTRAITS BY SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE.