

Finch & C^o



JAMES EARL (MASSACHUSETTS, A 1796)

AMERICAN PORTRAIT BY JAMES EARL OF MASSACHUSETTS (1761 - 1796) OF MR JANNER
CIRCA 1793

AN AMERICAN PORTRAIT BY JAMES EARL OF MASSACHUSETTS (1761 - 1796) OF MR JANNER INSCRIBED TO THE REVERSE
'MR JANNER AGED 41 BY J.EARL 1793 NO 5A NEWHAM STREET OXFORD STREET LONDON'

SIZE: 36CM HIGH, 30.5CM WIDE - 14 INS HIGH, 12 INS WIDE

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LITERATURE

JAMES EARL WAS AN AMERICAN PORTRAIT PAINTER TO THE AMERICAN ROYALISTS WHO SPENT THE GREATER PART OF HIS CAREER WORKING IN ENGLAND AS MANY OF HIS SITTERS WERE FORMER AMERICAN COLONISTS WHO HAD FLED TO LONDON DURING AND IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE END OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. HIS ANCESTORS WERE

QUAKERS WHO EMIGRATED FROM EXETER TO RHODE ISLAND IN ABOUT 1634. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 18TH CENTURY HIS GRANDFATHER SETTLED IN WORCESTER COUNTY MASSACHUSETTS AND JAMES EARL WAS BORN IN A VILLAGE CALLED PAXTON IN 1761. RALPH EARL (1726 - 1808), THE FATHER OF JAMES AND HIS ELDER BROTHER RALPH, WAS A FARMER WHO JOINED THE LOCAL MILITIA DURING THE REVOLUTION IN WHICH HE ACHIEVED THE RANK OF CAPTAIN. HOWEVER HIS SON RALPH (1751 - 1801) BECAME A LOYALIST AND BECAUSE OF HIS ACTIVITIES IN THIS CAUSE LEFT AMERICA AND ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A PAINTER IN ENGLAND FROM 1778 TO 1785. IT IS THOUGHT THAT HE TAUGHT HIS YOUNGER BROTHER JAMES AND AS HE WAS ALSO A LOYALIST, ENCOURAGED HIM TO GO TO LONDON. IN APRIL 1787 JAMES EXHIBITED TWO PORTRAITS AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY AND WAS RESIDENT AT 6 SWEETINGS ALLEY, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

IN 1789 HE MARRIED GEORGIANA CAROLINE PILKINGTON (1759 - 1838) THE WIDOW OF JOSEPH BREWER PALMER SMYTH, AN AMERICAN LOYALIST FROM NEW JERSEY. BOTH JAMES EARL AND THE SMYTHS LIVED AT 42 GREAT PETER STREET, WESTMINSTER. IN 1787 SMYTH RETURNED TO NORTH AMERICA TO SUBSTANTIATE CLAIMS FOR HIS LOST PROPERTY. IN A LETTER HE WROTE IN AUGUST 1788 FROM NIAGARA TO HIS WIFE HE SAID 'I HOPE MR EARL IS WELL IN HEALTH AND DESIRE MY BEST RESPECTS TO HIM. SMYTH DIED SHORTLY BEFORE RETURNING TO ENGLAND AND CAROLINE WAS LEFT WITH TWO CHILDREN, ELIZABETH ANN AND WILLIAM HENRY.

EARL ENROLLED IN THE ACADEMY SCHOOLS MARCH 24TH 1789 AND IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN A PUPIL OF BENJAMIN WEST. HE WAS AN ACCOMPLISHED AND POPULAR PAINTER AND THIRTY FOUR OF HIS PORTRAITS PAINTED DURING HIS SEVEN YEARS IN ENGLAND HAVE BEEN RECORDED SO FAR. MANY OF HIS PICTURES HAVE BEEN MISATTRIBUTED TO BETTER KNOWN ARTISTS SUCH AS SIR WILLIAM BEECHEY, GEORGE ROMNEY, MATHER BROWN, JOSHUA REYNOLDS OR TO HIS BROTHER RALPH EARL. INDEED FOUR OF HIS PORTRAITS OF THE BEAUCLERK FAMILY WERE ATTRIBUTED TO BEECHEY, AND THOSE OF LORD AUBREY AND HIS WIFE TO GEORGE ROMNEY WHEN THEY WERE SOLD BY SOTHEBYS IN 1949. ANOTHER PORTRAIT OF LADY MASSEREENE IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS IN RICHMOND USA WAS UNTIL RECENTLY ATTRIBUTED TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. HIS PORTRAITS ARE NOT AS STYLISED AS THOSE BY HIS BROTHER, AND HIS SUBJECTS ARE PORTRAYED WITH AN ALMOST PHOTOGRAPHIC INDIVIDUALITY. HIS PORTRAITS OF MEN ARE DIRECT AND WITHOUT FLATTERY, AND HE HAD A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN PORTRAYING THE EYES OF HIS SUBJECTS WITH AN ALMOST JEWEL-LIKE QUALITY.

IN 1794 HE TRAVELLED TO CHARLESTON CAROLINA AN EXPANDING, AFFLUENT TOWN, LEAVING HIS FAMILY IN LONDON. HIS OBITUARY STATES THAT HE HAD 'RESIDED FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS IN THIS CITY'. HE DIED OF YELLOW FEVER AND HAD MADE A WILL TWO DAYS BEFORE HIS DEATH. JAMES EARL HAD A REMARKABLE ABILITY TO CAPTURE A LIKENESS, AND HIS PICTURES ARE IMPORTANT ADDITIONS TO THE BODY OF 18TH CENTURY AMERICAN PORTRAIT PAINTING. HE WAS ALSO THE FATHER OF AUGUSTUS EARLE (1793 - 1838) WHO LIVED A LIFE OF EXPLORATION AS A DRAUGHTSMAN ON BOARD SHIP, AND WHO FAMOUSLY WAS THE ARTIST ON BOARD THE BEAGLE WITH CHARLES DARWIN WHEN HE SAILED TO THE GALAPAGOS.

PROVENANCE

CF: A PORTRAIT IN OILS BY JAMES EARL IN THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, CANADA, OF WILLIAM JARVIS WITH HIS SON SAMUEL PETER JARVIS (INV. NO. 981.79.1)