

JULIUS CAESAR IBBETSON

(Leeds 1759 - Masham 1817)

A Landscape with Travellers in a Horse Drawn Carriage and Figures Conversing by a Track

signed and indistinctly dated 'Jibbetson 178*' (lower right)

oil on canvas

37.2 x 46.3 cm (14 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ in)

Provenance: with Leggatt Bros., London.

IN THIS IDYLIC RURAL SCENE, JULIUS CAESAR IBBETSON creates a fine contrast between the frenetic coachman, spurring his horses into a furious gallop and the leisurely exchange amongst the group of figures in the foreground of the work. So absorbed are they in their gossip that they seem almost oblivious to the noise and vigorous movement of the horses rushing past them. The motion of the horses is beautifully conveyed by their front hooves which scarcely skim the ground as they fly past. The two dogs flanking the stationary party emphasise this contrast all the more.

The pink-tinged clouds and the simple rural dwelling pictured, correspond to the output of other English landscapists in the later eighteenth century, with Ibbetson clearly demonstrating the influence that the joint authority of seventeenth-century Dutch and Italian landscape paintings still exerted.

Ibbetson was an English painter, print maker and writer. He began his career as a copyist, predominantly of Dutch works in London which gained him the nickname 'the Berchem of England'. By 1785 he began to exhibit landscapes, genre scenes and portraits at the Royal Academy where he continued to do so for the next thirty years. He travelled extensively which did much to influence his landscape painting. Between 1787 and 1788, Ibbetson was the personal draughtsman to Colonel Charles Cathcart on the first British mission to Beijing, which encompassed visits to Madeira, the Cape of Good Hope and Java. On his return to England, Ibbetson stayed with John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute at Cardiff Castle and also visited the Isle of Wight in 1790. The rugged beauty of the island evidently made a profound impact on the artist as he subsequently began to paint scenes of shipwrecks and smugglings. His bleak and evocative *A Storm on the Isle of Wight*, see fig. 1, stands in sharp contrast to the softly tranquil scene of this *Landscape with Travellers in a Horse Drawn Carriage and Figures Conversing by a Track*.

Equally significant in Ibbetson's artistic development was a visit



Julius Caesar Ibbetson, *A Storm on the Isle of Wight*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio (Figure 1)

to Wales and the surrounding area with the painter John 'Warwick' Smith (1749-1831). The visit resulted in the publication of a book of engravings: *A Picturesque Guide* (1793). Not long after his Welsh travels, Ibbetson was commissioned in 1794 by the 2nd Earl of Mansfield to decorate the library ceiling of Kenwood House. In 1803 he published *An Accidence, or Gamut, of Painting in Oils and Watercolours* which was part autobiography and part technical treatise. In it he cited Claude Lorrain (?1604/5-1682) and Albert Cuyp (1620-1691) as masters of landscape composition. The book also provides important insights into Ibbetson's own methods, one of which was modelling through 'inner light' achieved through the application of thin glazes.

