

An important, mid-17th century, painted and stained, linen, hanging cloth

Sold



REF: 10475

Height: 334 cm (131.5")

Width: 762.5 cm (300.2")

Description

Painted with the parable of the prodigal son (St. Luke 16) beside a palatial building and formal gardens, amid a hilly landscape scattered with hamlets. The border decorated with flowers and foliage, and two cartouches with traces of a coat of arms. Bearing two, unidentified, stamps. Stained and painted in distemper, binding and mixing the pigments used (indigo, smalt, orpiment, realgar, chalk, native ochre and lamp black) into a paste with water and thinned with water-size. The unbleached linen strips xxx wide. Paint losses and general wear. Conserved (see reports).

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Research : C. Hassall, Paint Analysis Report, May 1999, concludes that the pigments found, particularly the native orpiment and realgar, are entirely appropriate for a 17th century date. Although technically they continue to be available to painters in the early years of the 18th century, it would be notable to find even one of them on a piece dating later than 1700, and finding them all points firmly to the early date. No specifically 18th century pigments were found. On a work where blue is so pervasive the absence of Prussian Blue, a pigment which became instantly and universally used after its invention in 1704, is further evidence that the hanging predates 1700.

Reference : A History of English Interiors (A. Gore), page 34 Owlpen Manor). Tudor Decoration & Furnishings (R. Edwards) page 106. A set of 'Acts of the Apostles', Hardwick Hall. Painted cloths (Matley Moore). Article in Textile History (Francis Mander)

This painted cloth is important, forming part of a small group which survive in their original condition or context. In general only fragments survive which are often in poor condition. Painted cloths were first recorded in England in the mid-14th century forming an integral part of interiors in royal apartments, and in the homes of nobility and church dignitaries. They had become widespread in the halls and upstairs rooms of manor houses by the 16th century when they became purely decorative and popular in subject matter often, as in this case, imitating more expensive tapestries and woven textiles. They continue to be found in the halls and parlours of the merchant and yeoman class in farm and town houses into the late-17th century. Their demise began in the 18th century when overseas trade expanded, manufacturing techniques developed, and consequently different mediums and styles were used for painted hangings. Printed textiles and wallpaper also became popular and inventories increasingly refer to painted or printed calicoes, chintz, silks, satin, and papers, many of which were imported from India and China. These replaced traditional, painted, linen cloths in fashionable interior schemes and many painted cloths were destroyed then and, subsequently in the 19th century, when the industrial revolution enabled the mass production of cheaper, printed textiles and wallpapers.

Consequently few people have seen painted cloths, and little is known about them. In addition to playing an important role in the history of interior decoration and the decorative arts, painted cloths also had great influence on the fine arts being the precursor of the painting on canvass which gradually replaced the...