



Sir John Lavery "The Tennis Party"

Sir John Lavery

Sold



REF: 31510

Height: 32.5 cm (12.8")

Width: 78.5 cm (30.9")

Description

The Tennis Party by Sir John Lavery.

This etching by Daniel Mordant faithfully represents Sir John Lavery's celebrated oil painting 'The Tennis Party', which now hangs in the Aberdeen Art Gallery. Painted during the summer of 1885 at Cartbank, a Georgian villa on Netherlee Road near Paisley, Renfrewshire, Glasgow, the work captures the elegance and energy of a mixed tennis match played in the grounds of his friend Alexander MacBride's home. Lavery had observed matches there throughout the summer, and this painting was carefully developed from preliminary sketches over several weeks.

The focal point is Elizabeth MacBride, sister of Alexander, who is shown to the right, poised mid-swing with her racket. Around her, players and spectators (possibly some of Lavery's friends, William Guthrie and Arthur Melville) alike are captured in a vivid moment of leisure: men lean casually against the fence, ladies sit and watch, while others stroll through the manicured garden. The size shown is for the main image with the etching being laid onto card stock, the full size being 39½ cm high by 82½ cm wide.

The painting itself, monumental in scale at approximately one metre high by three metres wide, is regarded as Lavery's most accomplished depiction of tennis and one of the most influential images shaping our vision of the sport. It beautifully illustrates the social rituals of late Victorian Britain, when lawn tennis was emerging as both a fashionable pastime and a marker of modern leisure.

Born in Belfast in 1856, Sir John Lavery became closely associated with the Glasgow School of Painting and was often referred to as the "Belfast-born Glasgow Boy." While he painted alongside the Glasgow Boys, he developed his own reputation as a society portraitist, later achieving fame with works such as Queen Victoria's state visit to the Glasgow International Exhibition in 1888. Lavery's style combined naturalism with an impressionistic sensitivity, his sketch-like brushwork drawing comparisons to James McNeill Whistler. Knighted in 1918, Lavery remained a prominent figure in British and Irish art until his death in 1941.

When first exhibited, The Tennis Party received a mixed reception at the Royal Academy in London, but it was warmly praised in Paris, where it won a medal at the Salon and was admired for its modern, impressionist manner. Today, the painting endures as a quintessential image of tennis and of genteel Victorian society, offering a charming evocation of elegant times and the timeless pleasure of outdoor sport.