

George Romney



Study of Satan for 'The Fall of the Rebel Angels'

Reference: 10896

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Dimensions:

Height: 24.50 cm / 9⁵/₈ in

Width: 17.10 cm / 6³/₄ in

Pen and grey ink and grey wash over pencil

24.5 x 17.1 cm.; 10 x 6 ³/₄ inches

Provenance

With the Squire Gallery;

J. Thursby-Pelham;

Mrs Guy Argles and by descent until 1995, anon. sale Christie's, London, 7 November 1995, lot 71;

Spink, London;

Christie's, London, 21 November 2002, lot 8, where bought by the previous owner;

Dreweatt's, Château de Lasfonds sale, 16 November 2022, lot 143

Exhibited

Spink, London, 'Annual Exhibition of Watercolours and Drawings, 28 May – 21 June 1996, no. 4

This imposing drawing shows Satan holding his shield aloft to defend himself against Heaven. Romney made many illustrations to Milton's 'Paradise Lost' around 1794. This drawing appears to show a moment in Book 1 when Satan and the other rebels are 'Hurl'd headlong, flaming from the ethereal sky'. Elsewhere in the poem Milton compares Satan's shield to a moon seen through Galileo's telescope.

Another similar drawing in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum also shows Satan holding his shield above his head

<https://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/16046>

It is possible that the French Revolution, raging at this time, was close to Romney's mind when he worked on these drawings for 'Paradise Lost', giving them some contemporary political significance.