

Mrs Augusta Innes Withers



The Nursery

Reference: 10925

Dimensions:

Height: 25.20 cm / 9⁷/₈ in

Width: 31.60 cm / 12¹/₂ in

Watercolour over traces of pencil with gum arabic

25.2 x 31.6 cm.; 9 7/8 x 12 3/8 inches

Provenance

David Cornwell (aka John Le Carré, 1931-2020)

Augusta Innes Withers, the daughter of a Chaplain to the Prince Regent, was born in Cheltenham. She was well known to contemporaries and widely praised for her botanical and bird pictures, characterised by her meticulously detailed and accurate work, which is beautifully illustrated in the present watercolour of canaries. The bird food is in an octagonal trencher salt made of French faience or Dutch delft.

Withers enjoyed a successful career and exhibited widely, at the Royal Academy in London from 1829 to 1846, the Royal

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Society of British Artists where she showed sixty-eight works between 1832-65 and the New Watercolour Society. She was one of the earliest members of the Society of Women Artists where she exhibited forty-three works from 1857-75. Withers enjoyed Royal patronage and was appointed flower painter to Queen Adelaide in 1833, and flower and fruit painter to Queen Victoria in 1864. She is also listed as a painter to the Horticultural Society.

In 1822 she married Theodore Withers (1782-1869), an accountant from Middlesex. The couple lived mainly in London and had at least two children, Theodore (b. 1823) and Augusta (b. 1825).

Withers contributed to many publications including The Botanist, John Lindley's The Pomological Magazine and Curtis's Botanical Magazine. She illustrated Robert Thompson's The Gardener's Assistant, 1859 and collaborated with Sarah Drake on James Bateman's Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala.

Three of Withers' paintings are in the Natural History Museum, London. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge has a good holding of her watercolours, as does the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society.

David Cornwell is better known by his pen name of John Le Carré, whose spy novels are internationally renowned, and many have been adapted for film and television. He worked for the Security Services in the 1950s and 1960s before turning to writing full time.