

Edward Lear



Benares

Reference: 11048

Dimensions:

Height: 25.50 cm / 10 in

Width: 40 cm / 15¾ in

KT487

Signed with monogram I.L., watercolour over pencil heightened with bodycolour and gum arabic

25.5 x 40 cm.; 10 x 15 ¾ inches

Provenance

Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, Bt. (1897-1988);

Francis Sitwell (1935-2004);

By descent at Weston Hall, Northamptonshire until 2021

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Lear was invited to India by his friend and patron Lord Northbrook who was appointed Viceroy in 1871, and his journey there was the last and longest of his life. He was overwhelmed by the colour and vitality of India and enjoyed the bustle of Viceregal life. After leaving Lord Northbrook, Benares was one of the first places Lear visited, arriving on 12th December 1873.

Lear describes Benares in his 'Indian Journal', on December 13-14 1873,

(ed. Ray Murphy, 1953, pp. 45-6):

'Nothing short of a moving opera scene can give any idea of the intense and wonderful colour and detail of these Benares river banks...

'Got a boat, a large one, for on one can have the last idea of this Indian city's splendour without this arrangement. Utterly wonderful is the rainbow-like edging of the water with thousands of bathers reflected in the river. Then the colour of the temples, the strangeness of the huge umbrellas and the inexpressibly multitudinous details of architecture costume etc. Drew, more or less, as I was slowly row'd up and down the river...Howe well I remember the views of Benares by Daniell, R.A.; pallid, gray, sad solemn. I had always supposed this a place of melancholy or at least a staid and soberly-coloured spot, a gray record of bygone days,. Instead, I find it one of the most abundantly bruyant, and startlingly radiant of places full of bustle and movement. '

This drawing used to hang in Sir Sacheverell Sitwell's study and dressing room at Weston Hall, Northamptonshire, where he did all his writing.