

George Romney



Antigone with the body of Polynices

Reference: 11118

Dimensions:

Height: 56.50 cm / 22¼ in

Width: 48.50 cm / 19⅞ in

KAREN TAYLOR FINE ART

Black chalk and pencil on laid paper watermarked with the Strasburg Lily

56.5 x 48.5 cm.; 22 ¼ x 19 inches

Provenance

Christopher Powney, 1980; from whom bought by

Private collection, U.K. until 2023

Exhibited

Morton Morris & Company with Christopher Powney, 'Drawings by George Romney', 21 October – 7 November 1980, no. 48 (ill.)

The drawing shows Antigone mourning the death of her brother Polynices at the hand of their sibling Eteocles who also perished in their fatal duel.

Powney suggested that the subject taken from the Thebaid of Statius, Book XII (see Drawings by George Romney, op cit.). The Latin epic poem in twelve books, published in the last decade of the first century, tells of the clash between the two sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices over the throne of Thebes.

This substantial early work by Romney dates from the end of the 1760s or the early 1770s. It exhibits the bold and incisive characteristics which are hallmarks of Romney's drawing style but is an unusually finished composition, controlled and tempered by the demands of neoclassicism.

Romney's friend the writer William Hayley (1745-1820) fuelled the artist's desire to learn more about literature and the classics, and on Romney's visits to his home in Sussex Hayley kept a notebook in which he, Romney and the other guests wrote down 'Hints for Pictures' to encourage the enlargement of his knowledge of the classics. Hayley was planning a new translation of Statius (see A. Kidson, George Romney, (1734-1802, 2002, p. 6).

Like most Romney's drawings, this work is of a subject which was not turned into an oil. Romney destroyed many of his drawing before leaving for Paris in 1764 as he lacked the space in which to store them. The majority of those that survive date from after 1775 and his return from Rome. Another drawing of Antigone is in the Romney collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.