

KAREN TAYLOR FINE ART

POETICAL TOPOGRAPHY
TRAVELS WITH EDWARD LEAR (1812-1888)



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The drawings are available for purchase and viewing by appointment now and will be on view in our Summer Exhibition at 8 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1Y 6BL from 28 June – 5 July 2024

High resolution images available on request.

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For many years after his death in 1888, Edward Lear's reputation rested on his extraordinary poetry. Featuring magical creatures such as the Dong with a luminous nose, the Pobble who lost his toes, the pair of sailors in the beautiful pea-green boat and his brilliant limericks, his work earned him his place in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. Today, however, we recognise his artistic achievements as well, and over the years the many exhibitions of his ornithological art and landscapes have cemented his well-deserved reputation as an artist of the first rank. I am delighted to be able to offer a selection of Lear's drawings for sale and to exhibit a group of watercolours from several private collections for the first time, loans for which I am most grateful.

Lear's quirky early drawings of birds exhibit the humour found in his verse and four charming drawings from the Strachey collection give a representative flavour of these rare works. The spoonbill has a delightful stance as it appears to study its toes. Two lithographs of parrots represent the artist's outstanding printed work produced when he was only eighteen.

In 1837, with financial assistance from his patron, Lord Derby (1775 -1851), the twenty-five-year-old Lear set off for Rome. He remained based there for the following decade, a formative phase of his artistic development. The influence of the artist James Duffield Harding (1798 – 1863), whose drawing manuals Lear owned, can be seen in his pencil and chalk drawings of Vico and Tivoli (catalogue numbers 6 and 7). During the summer months, Lear would travel to other parts of Italy, and a selection of watercolours from a private collection depict scenes from the Roman Campagna to Calabria. In the winter, he would return to Rome and sell his work to British residents and visitors to the city.

I am delighted to show watercolours from a private collection which belonged to Lear's friend and travelling companion, and later Sub Dean of Wells Cathedral, Charles Church (1823-1915), last exhibited at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield in the 1960s, as well as a previously unseen collection assembled by Colonel Clifford Gourlay (1888–1975). Lear's views of Greece and Italy display a delightful spontaneity of execution and a plethora of quirkily observed details.

Lear's travel watercolours, often extensively inscribed, frequently with nonsense writing, which he used extensively for reference for his oils and more finished watercolours, form the basis of this exhibition. Lear made a clear distinction between them and his more finished studio work. While they are unsigned, they are invariably dated and numbered, often with the time of execution recorded, as well as detailed colour notes and other inscriptions.

Lear's style of travel was leisurely, but he concentrated intensely and drew quickly during his working periods, usually first thing in the morning and in the evening. Some works were drawn in a matter of minutes, others, usually on larger sheets, such as the beautiful views of Bagaladi and Argostoli (catalogue numbers 9 and 15), would take him a few hours of an evening. He numbered the drawings in sequence as he went along. He added colour washes once he was back at home, following his colour notes made on the spot, and pen and ink inscriptions are frequently superimposed over the original pencil comments.

Lear's landscapes are invariably topographically accurate, but his poetic handling, which transcends representation, makes his work so appealing. His phrase 'poetical topography' aptly describes his watercolours and perhaps underscores the noticeable confidence of his working drawings. In one of the two views of Haniá in Crete, Lear draws music, a fascinating example of synaesthesia, and his pictorial interpretation of the notes can be seen hanging in the air around the Turkish military band (his diary records their music as 'shrieky-dissonant', see catalogue numbers 17 and 18).

Lear greatly admired Lord Byron (1788 - 1824) as a child, as a result of which he had been fascinated by Greece from an early age. The beautiful drawings of Athens, Euobaea, Mount Athos and Argostoli (catalogue numbers 10 - 20) reflect his particular affection for the country. He wrote to his friend Chichester Fortescue before he first set out for Greece that, 'I cannot but think that Greece has been most imperfectly illustrated... the vast yet beautifully simple sweeping lines of the hills have hardly been represented I fancy – nor the primitive dry foregrounds of Elgin marble peasants &c. What do you think of a huge work (if I can do all Greece)?' (26.viii.48 MS, Somerset Record Office, Taunton). Lear travelled with Charles Church on his first trip to Greece in June and July 1848, and two recently rediscovered watercolours drawn then, last exhibited in the 1960s, belong to one of Church's descendants (catalogue numbers 10 and 11). While he travelled all over Greece from 1848 – 1864, drawing extensively, he never made a comprehensive record of the entire country.

By 1853, Lear was on his way to Egypt. The fascinating view of Aswan in Nubia, from the estate of Martin Davies (1924-2023), the President of the Egypt Society of Bristol, whose enthusiasm I remember with fondness, dates from Lear's third trip to Egypt in 1867. The drawing accurately depicts the quarries mined by the Ancient Egyptians for the granite to build their temples (catalogue number 22).

Lear's last trip (1873 - 1875) was to India, at the invitation of his friend and patron, Lord Northbrook (1826 – 1904), who served as Viceroy from 1872 to 1876. This was the longest journey Lear ever undertook and he was overwhelmed by the colour and vitality of everything he saw in India. The beautiful, bustling view of Benares belonged to Sir Sacheverell Sitwell (1897 – 1988) and hung in his study and dressing room where he wrote at Weston Hall, Northamptonshire (catalogue number 26).

In 1870, Lear built a house in San Remo on the Italian Riviera, where he lived with Giorgio, his devoted manservant and travelling companion, after his return from India until his death in 1888. It was in this period that he wrote his greatest nonsense poetry and conceived of the Dong, the Pobble, the Jumblies and the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.

I am grateful to many people for their help and encouragement, and offer my particular thanks to Oliver Brind, Edward Clive, Stephen Duckworth, Roupén Kalfayan, Guy Peppiatt and Dr Stephen Spurr and the British Library. I have been handling Lear's work for forty years and I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey and all the byways and rabbit holes of people, places and poetry along the way.

Karen Taylor

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Two parrots on a branch***

Signed l.r.: *E. Lear*, pencil with watercolour and touches of gold
23 x 17.7 cm.; 9 x 7 inches

Provenance (nos. 1-4)

Sir Edward Strachey, Bt., (1812-1901) and by descent to the previous owners

These charming, quirky drawings are characteristic early works by Lear, dating from the late 1820s or early 1830s when he was establishing himself as an ornithological artist. They relate to a group of drawings which Lear gave to Mrs Godfrey Wentworth, who supported his employment by the Zoological Society in 1831, and whom he credited with launching him as an artist. They are imaginary, fanciful subjects drawn with not a little humour, resembling the stylised watercolours of birds painted on late eighteenth century porcelain. Robert McCracken Peck has made the interesting suggestion that Lear and his sister Ann may have been thinking of approaching ceramics companies with them (see Robert McCracken Peck, *The Natural History of Edward Lear*, 2016, pp. 27-9).

Two surviving family albums from the late 1820s, containing a mixture of similar natural history subjects by Edward Lear and his sisters Ann and Sarah, are in the collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (MS Typ 55.4 and 55.27).

Sir Edward Strachey was a man of letters and friend of Lear's, who wrote an introduction to *Nonsense Songs* in 1895. He lived at Sutton Court, Chew Magna in Somerset and was a neighbour of Lear's close friend Chichester Fortescue, the Liberal politician whom Lear first met in Rome in 1845.



Edward Lear
(1812-1888)
*Two parrots on
a branch*

Edward Lear (1812-1888)

A spoonbill by the shore

Signed l.l.: *E. Lear*, pencil with watercolour, gum arabic and pen and black ink
17.7 x 23 cm.; 7 x 9 inches



Edward Lear (1812-1888)

A merganser on the shore

Signed l.c.: *E. Lear*, pencil with watercolour, pen and black ink and touches of gold
17.7 x 23 cm.; 7 x 9 inches



Edward Lear (1812-1888)

An avocet near the sea

Signed l.l.: *E. Lear*, pencil with watercolour

23 x 17.7 cm.; 9 x 7 inches

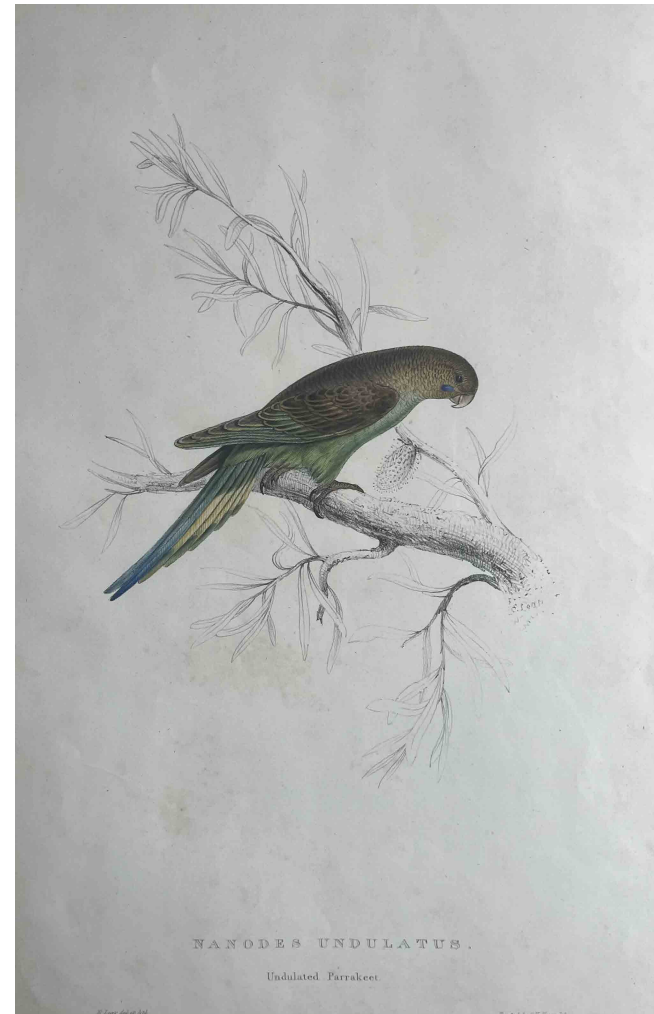
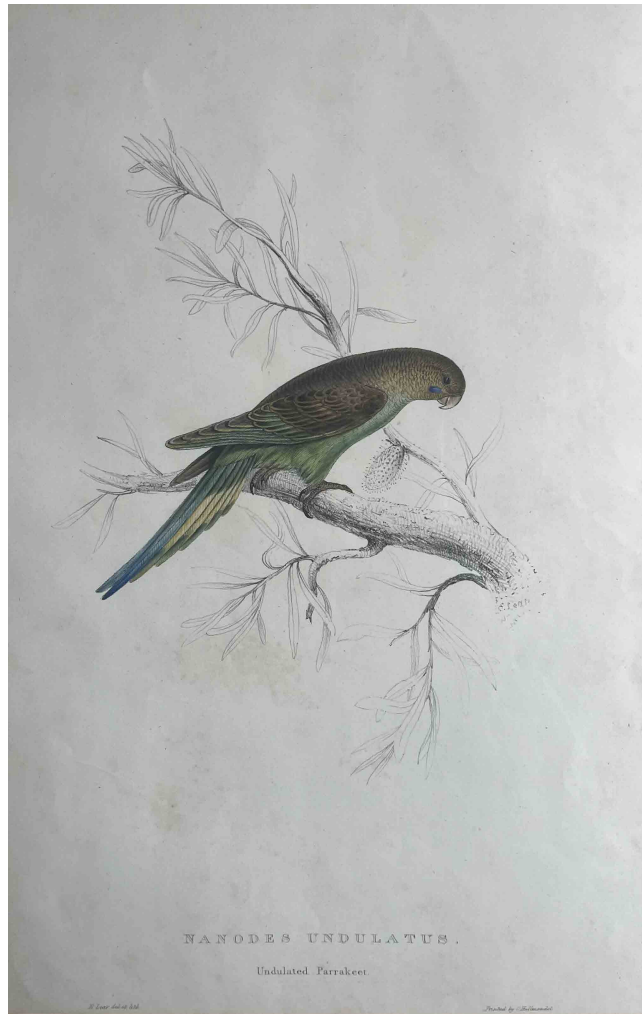


Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Psittacula Rubrifrons, Red-fronted Parrakeet and Nanodes Undulatus, Undulated Parrakeet***

Two hand-coloured lithographs with original hand-colouring on wove paper, drawn and lithographed by Edward Lear, printed by Charles Hullmandel, 1832

Each approx. 50.5 x 33 cm.; 19 ¾ x 13 inches

These lithographs are from Lear's book *Illustrations of the Family Psittacidae, or Parrots*, a work that combines 'the most exacting scientific naturalism with a masterly sense of design and intuitive sympathy for animal intelligence', (Susan Hyman, *Edward Lear's Birds*, 1980). Lear started work on this book when he was eighteen and supervised every step of the publication. He made many of his original sketches from the live specimens at the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park. Christine Jackson describes Lear's painstaking approach to his work: 'Lear worked in detail, outlining every feather and filling in the details with fine lines. This scientific accuracy extended to every part of the bird, from the beak to the claws. The colouring was done with opaque watercolours with touches of egg-white for parts of the feathers requiring sheen, and for the eye, to add that life-like touch', (Christine Jackson, *Bird Illustrators: Some Artists in Early Lithography*, London, 1975).



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
***Psittacula Rubrifrons*, Red-fronted Parrakeet and *Nanodes Undulatus*, Undulated Parrakeet**

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Vico near Naples***

Signed l. l: *Edw.d Lear. del./1839*, black chalk and stump on buff paper
26.3 by 38.9 cm., 10 ¼ by 15 ¼ inches

Lear spent his summers at the end of 1830s travelling in Italy. Vico is a small town near Sorrento on the bay of Naples. This highly finished, crisply drawn work with white heightening shows the influence of James Duffield Harding, whose drawing manuals Lear owned.

Two pencil drawings by Lear drawn near Vico in August 1838 are in the collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard (MS Typ 55.26 NI.R12 and pga_ms_typ_55_26_121).



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Vico near Naples

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***The Villa Adriana, Tivoli***

Signed and dated l.r.: *Edward Lear. Del 1842*, inscribed l.l.: *Villa Adriana.*, pencil heightened with white on buff paper
24 x 36.7 cm.; 9 3/8 x 14 3/8 inches

Provenance

Phillip's, London, 11 November 1997, lot 45;
Private collection U.K. until 2023

This crisply drawn view of the Villa Adriana (or Hadrian's Villa) with white highlights is a fine example of the artist's sophisticated pencil drawing style which he favoured early in his Italian sojourn and shows the influence of James Duffield Harding.

A related drawing of the Villa Adriana in upright format is in the collection of the British Museum (1892,1119.15). The same figures can be seen in the foreground and the emphasis is on the trees on the right of the composition.

Situated on a low plain on the slopes of the Tiburtine Hills, the Villa Adriana was the largest villa of the Roman era, covering an area of over 120 hectares.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The Villa Adriana, Tivoli

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Pratalata, Italy***

Inscribed and dated l.l.: *Tenuta apocrypha/(Pratalata.)/March 1847*, pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil with white on buff paper
17.5 x 48.5 cm.; 6 5/8 x 19 1/8 inches

Provenance

Colonel Clifford Gourlay, MC (1888– 1975);
By descent to the present owners

Pietralata is a hamlet to the northeast of Rome, near Fiano Romano. The large estate (tenuta) dating from the Ancient Roman period used to be known as Pratalata. The grottos in the foreground show ancient tufa quarries, which are typical of that part of the Roman Campagna. Lear also drew at the nearby Grotte di Cervara.

Colonel Clifford Gourlay lived at 30 Seymour Street, W1, which had been Lear's home and studio, and developed an interest in the artist. Gourlay was also a trustee of Lord Tennyson (1919-1991), the great-grandson of the poet to whom Lear was close and who founded the Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln with his cousin, Sir Charles Tennyson (1879-1977).



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Pratalata, Italy

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Bagaladi, Italy***

Inscribed, numbered and dated *l.l.: Bagaladi./30 July.1847./18*, further inscribed l.r. in pencil: *large to... stone .(heavenna?)*., pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil heightened with white, inscribed in a later hand in pencil verso: *Pragelato/North (?) Italy*

Full sheet (corners cut) 25.7 x 45.5 cm.; 10 1/8 x 17 7/8 inches

Sight size 24.3 x 41.5 cm.; 9 5/8 x 16 1/4 inches

Provenance

Colonel Clifford Gourlay, MC (1888– 1975);

By descent to the present owners

In the summer of 1847, Lear spent six weeks travelling in Calabria in Southern Italy, arriving in the region on 25 July. Bagaladi is situated on a fiumara, or dry torrent course, a characteristic of the area.

On 30 July 1847 Lear's diary records him rushing out after his siesta when the sun was already low, and drawing the town before dark:

'It is a wild scene, shattered houses still hang ruinously over the shivered clay sides of the mighty torrent-track, a broad sweeping line of white stone, far, far winding through the alley below; above rise the high hills, half in golden light, half in purplest [sic] shadow; and among the topmost furrows and chasms sparkes [sic] the little village of San Lorenzo... a solitary region, but beautifully majestic'. (see: *Edward Lear in Southern Italy: Journals of a Landscape Painter in Southern Calabria and the Kingdom of Naples*, introduction by Peter Quennell, 1964, pp. 42-3).



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Bagaladi, Italy

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Athens - the Parthenon and the Frankish Tower***

Extensively inscribed and dated: *Athens./6 & 14th June/1848/(15), wilderness of white blocks & long grass/2 light edges on the fluting of/column x/3.8 the Parthenon should be on higher ground at ox/compare with x/earth & bits/weed & brambles/PLAIN*, pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil
29.4 x 50.8 cm.; 11 5/8 x 20 inches

Provenance

Charles Church (1823-1915) and by family descent to the present owner
(on loan)

Exhibited

Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, *Edward Lear, Drawings from a Greek Tour*, July 1964, no. 7

This evocative drawing of the Parthenon was done shortly after the artist first arrived in Greece, where he had long wished to travel, on 2 June 1848. This drawing has many inscriptions to help Lear remember the view, technical corrections about the placement of the buildings in relation to each other and some of his highly evocative comments such as 'wilderness of white blocks'. He has drawn the temple with great precision and clearly enjoyed recording the fragments of the columns scattered on the ground.

The Frankish Tower was a medieval tower near the Propylaia, the monumental gateway on the western corner of the Acropolis. The Tower was used as a watchtower, a beacon, a prison and a salt store. It was demolished in 1875.

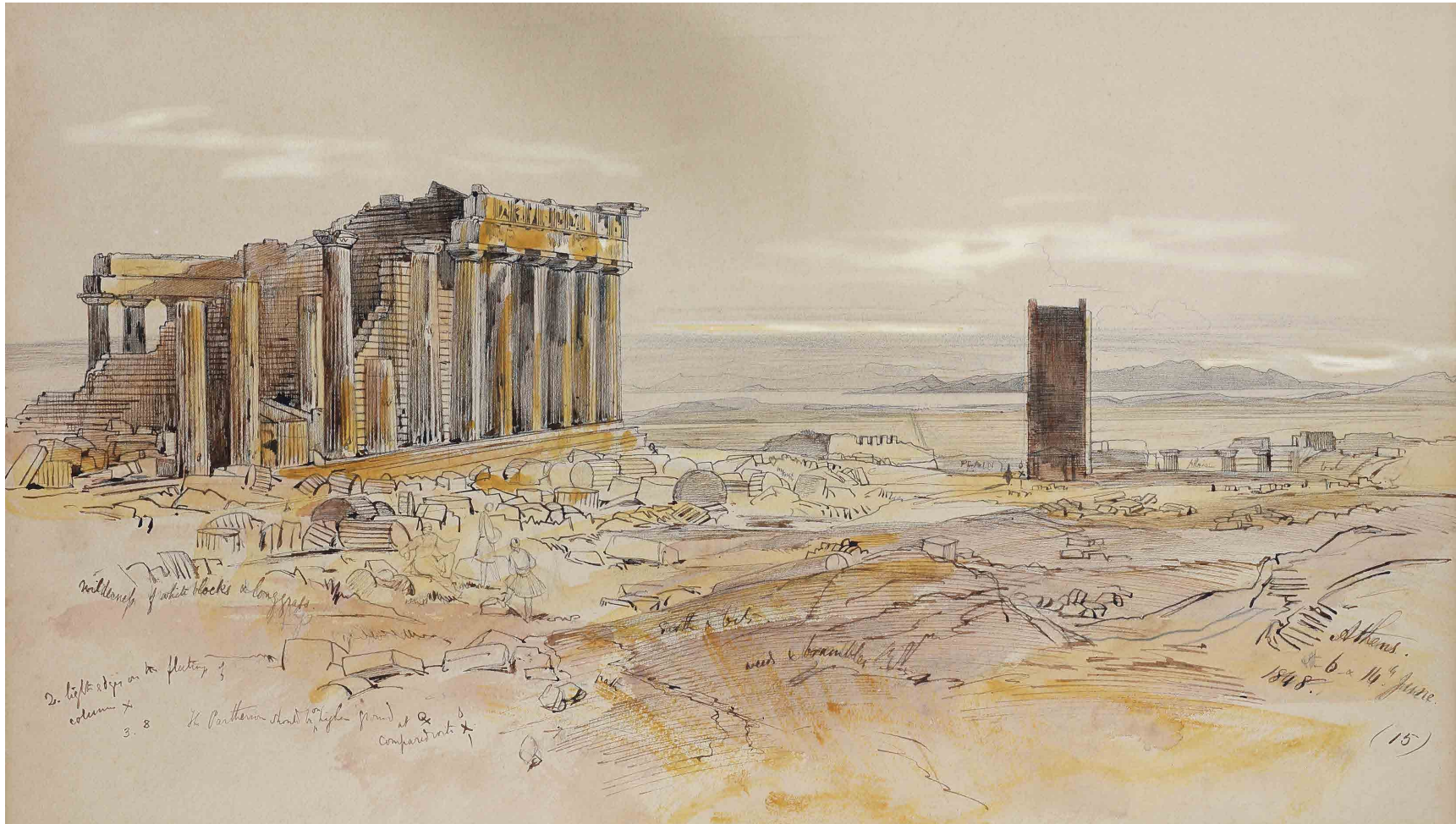
Lear's travelling companion was Charles Church. They first met in Rome in 1847, during Church's trip through Europe after leaving Oxford, on his way to stay with his uncle Sir Richard Church (1784-1873), who had

commanded Greek forces in the War of Independence against Turkey. The two met again by chance in Athens in 1848 and decided to travel in Greece together. Church was interested in classical antiquity and, unlike Lear, spoke modern Greek, proving to be a resourceful and cheerful companion.

Church records: 'For the next ten days his journals describe him as giving himself up to the study of the scenes and art around... "Doing nothing but draw, draw, draw." Meanwhile I saw him most days on his sketching ground and was with him while he drew, and gradually our plans of travel grew.' Lear made over twenty sketches of Athens in the ten days he was in the city, including this watercolour, numbered 15.

From this trip a lifelong friendship was born, and Church put together a large collection of Lear's work from this and later tours. Lear bequeathed to him over one hundred sketches from the 1848 trip.

Church became Sub Dean of Wells Cathedral, and later in life wrote a manuscript which was never published, *With Edward Lear In Greece: Being recollections of travel in Hellenic lands two generations ago, with extracts from his Journals and Letters*. This was illustrated by his sketches recording their travels, largely based on Lear's now lost diary. The typescript of this manuscript is now in the archives of Westminster School.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Near Kumi, Euboea (Kymi, Evia)***

Inscribed and dated l.l.: *near Kumi./24 June. 1848*, numbered l.r.: (59) and further inscribed with colour notes, pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil
33 x 50.5 cm.; 13 x 19 7/8 inches

Provenance

Charles Church (1823-1915) and by family descent to the present owner

Exhibited

Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, Edward Lear, *Drawings from a Greek Tour*, July 1964, no. 21

After 10 days in Athens, Lear and Charles Church travelled to Chalcis, where their plans changed due to fighting in Thebes. They decided to go to Euboea for a week, and they arrived in Kumi (now generally known as Kymi) on 20 June.

Euoboea, also known as Evia, in central Greece, is the second largest island in Greece after Crete, with very mountainous terrain, as can be seen in this drawing. Kumi overlooks the sea.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Near Kumi, Euboea (Kymi, Evia)

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***The Monastery of Great Lavra, Mt. Athos, Greece***

Inscribed in Greek and dated l.r.: *Λαύρα* /5th, 6.th Sept. 1856., and l.l.: *Cistus/ Clematis*, numbered 57 lower right, and further inscribed with colour notes, pen and brown ink and watercolour over traces of pencil
35.5 x 52.1 cm; 14 x 20 ½ inches

Provenance

Charles Church, a gift from the artist and by family descent;
Private collection (on loan)

One of the most important monastic sites of the Byzantine Empire, Mount Athos, on the Chalkidike peninsula in north-eastern Greece, has 20 monasteries still operating today. The monastery of the Great Lavra, or Megisti Lavra, was the first to be built in 963 CE and is the largest foundation. It is the first in rank of the monasteries of Athos, built as a small medieval town surrounded by a fortress with 15 towers. The original *katholikon*, or main church, a four-columned building with a dome, still exists.

Lear was on Mount Athos from 29 August to 20 September 1865 and the Yale Center for British Art hold a detailed list he made of all fifty of his drawings. He kept a diary of his trip, but as this has been lost, the list and his letters are the only record of his work on Mount Athos.

On 21st August he wrote to his sister Ann of his plans:

I will tell you in a few words, somewhat about Mt Athos, where I am going. It is called by the Greeks Ἁγίον ὄρος 'The Holy Mountain' – and has always been, i.e. from the very early ages, an object of great veneration, & indeed a sort of Holy Land to their form of Christianity. I should tell you that near here is a peninsular of singular form ending in 3 prongs, & called by the ancients Chalcidice because first colonised from Chalcis in Greece. When Xerxes invaded Greece he cut a canal through the narrow bit at A, to avoid sailing round Athos, which is the point marked B & is the only

mountainous bit of the whole peninsular. [.....] Well the high rock of Athos was chosen after the renunciation of Paganism by Constantine as a place of retreat & devotion just as Syria & the Thebaid were. But Athos has never been in the way of war or disturbance, & so the immense monasteries founded by successive emperors have remained undisturbed, & you may conclude are very picturesque. There are 20 principal monasteries ... up & down – besides 50 or 60 little ones! - I mean to go to all, & draw all, & most probably publish all. Every nation possessing the Greek form of faith has one, Russia a large one, Bulgaria, etc, etc. But the queer part of the story is that no female creature is allowed within the holy ground, let it be woman, no she cat, no hen, no she ass, or mare etc !!! The common people devoutly believe any woman would die if she crossed the boundary (though Lady Stratford and her daughter went to several of the convents & tell all sorts of absurd stories). It would matter little enough, only one can't get fowls or eggs, so you will imagine me living on fish and fruit during my visit. I mean, as far as I can, to pay great attention to drawing this remarkable place, and may remain 2 or 3 or even more weeks before I come out of it [.....] (see <https://edwardlearandmountathos.weebly.com/ann-lear.html>. The original letters have been lost, and this extract is based on a typed transcription made in 1930s, edited by Stephen Duckworth).



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The Monastery of Great Lavra, Mt. Athos, Greece

Edward Lear (1812-1888)

The Monastery of Great Lavra, Mt. Athos, from an olive grove

Pen and brown ink and watercolour over traces of pencil, inscribed in Greek and dated l.l.: *Λαύρα / 6 Sept. 1856*, numbered 55 l. r., and further inscribed with colour notes
33.6 x 53.3 cm; 13 1/8 x 21 inches

Provenance

Charles Church, a gift from the artist, and by family descent;
Private collection (on loan)

In a letter to his sister Ann written from Salonika on 23 September, Lear records his initial impression of the monastery, the warm welcome he received from Melchisedek, the head of the monastery, and the time he spent at Lávro while Giorgio was ill with a fever:

'I suppose in all the world there is no finer coast scenery than below Athos, the peak at the end of the peninsular. You walk always in a thick grove, or on the top of high cliffs, but as you approach the mountain, it becomes hidden from you by projecting rocks above. At sunset I reached the huge monastery Lávro which stands on a point of high land & is beautifully situated; built to contain 800 monks, it now has barely 200, but its courtyard full of orange & lemon trees, with the domes of the churches & clock towers, is a wonderfully interesting scene.

'Meanwhile for 5 days I lounged about Lávro - drawing it all round; poking about the sea shore or into the hermitages among the half-witted old filthy Caloyeri; or watched the Tom cats in the galleries; or talked Greek with Melchisedek & Anthemos - smoking 5 pipes a day, & having my morning & every meal with that good dirty man; for it must be said in truth that filth was at least as remarkable a characteristic of my friend's menage as charity & kindness of his own character; I vow that the table cloth daily laid was not less than ¼ inch thick in substantial ancient dirt. U! O! A! what did I suffer! what did I not eat! Well - at last I came away, as soon as Giorgio could move, resolving to go to St. Paul's as my next stage.'

In a letter to Chichester Fortescue written from Corfu in October Lear recounts walking 8 to 10 miles a day when on Athos (see *Letters of Edward Lear to Chichester Fortescue Lord Carlingford and Frances Countess Waldegrave*, ed. by Lady Strachey of Sutton Court (London, 1909).



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The Monastery of Great Lavra, Mt. Athos, from an olive grove

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***A view of Santa Maura, Akarnia, Greece***

Inscribed, dated and numbered l.r.: *Akarnia/Santa Maura/20 April. 1863/9.A.M./(59)*, and further inscribed with colour notes, pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil heightened with bodycolour
34.9 x 48.8 cm; 13 ½ x 19 ¼ inches

Provenance

Private collection (on loan)

Lear undertook a tour of the Ionian Islands (but not Corfu) from 3 April to 4 June 1863, shortly before the British withdrew and the islands' 1864 incorporation into Greece. He used the drawings for his book, *Views in the Seven Ionian Islands*, published in London in December 1863.

Santa Maura is now known as Lefkás and lies just off Akasania on the Greek mainland. Lear drew this view in the soft morning light.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
A view of Santa Maura, Akarnia, Greece

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Argostoli, Cephalonia, Greece***

Inscribed and dated lr.: *Argostoli./7 A.M. 4 May. 1863.(125) and further inscribed l.c.: S S Bay brightsilver/Black Mountains pale gray-faint farthest off/next range darker, with okr/Ridge opposite town, very dark-sky very pale, no blue* and with further colour notes, pen and brown ink and watercolour with traces of pencil, inscribed verso: *97./ Longwise*
33.7 x 52.4 cm.; 13 ¼ x 20 5/8 inches

Provenance

Colonel Clifford Gourlay, MC (1888– 1975);
By descent to the present owners

Lear's diary tells us that he rose at 5.30 on Monday 4th May and set off with Giorgio to draw above the city. He drew this beautiful watercolour at 7 am. He then moved into the Residency in the city, the home of Mr Lane, where he was very comfortable. Although plagued by toothache, he seems to have enjoyed himself, and his diary is full of the details of his life that day.

Argostoli has been the capital of the island of Cephalonia since 1757. Situated by the sea, it is on the western side of the island and is surrounded by small hills.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Argostoli, Cephalonia, Greece

Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Potamos, Cerico (Kythera), Greece

Inscribed in pen and brown ink with location in Greek l.r. and dated: *21. May 5 P.M. 1863* and again in pencil and numbered 189, further extensively inscribed with colour notes and comments, pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil, inscribed and numbered verso:

159/Lon...?

32 x 48 cm; 12 1/2 x 18 7/8 inches

This view is taken looking across the northern part of the village of Potamos, from the northeast towards the southwest. Mt. Myrmingari can be seen in the centre background, and Aghia Elessa is the rise to the left.

Lear's extensive diary entry for 21st May 1863 records him rising at 4 am and drawing much of the morning. After a lunch of cold fowl, old lettuce, 'biled eggs' and bad wine he continued climbing, enjoying the views until he reached the house of Pruestos where he sketched on the terrace in a high wind until 5 pm and lodged for the night. He noted that the Potamite women were tall, and has drawn one in the foreground of this drawing.

For details of Lear's tour of the Ionian islands see catalogue no. 14.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Potamos, Cerico (Kythera), Greece

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Canéa, (Haniá), Crete***

Inscribed and dated l.l.: *17 April. 1864/6.40 PM./Canéa* and indistinctly in pencil and numbered l.r.: (15) and again in pencil, pen and brown ink and watercolour
22.5 x 34.5 cm.; 8 ¾ x 13 ½ inches

Provenance

Cradock and Barnard, London;
Christie's, London 6 June 2002, lot 109;
Maurice Edward Dear, from whom bought in 2008 by
Peter Roberts, until 2023

Edward Lear arrived in Crete on 11 April 1864 and stayed until 31 May.

The artist's journal records a busy day on Sunday 17 April. He sketched first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening, when he went down to the rocks with Giorgio and made the present drawing, which captures the rich evening light (see ed. Rowena Fowler, *Edward Lear The Cretan Journal*, 2012, p. 15).

Lear had a characteristically productive time on the island and referred to '196 drawings - & a vast number of small bits' when working on his Cretan sketches in England in the summer of 1864.

Peter Roberts was a school master and collector of English watercolours who taught English at Oundle School until his retirement in 2007.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Canéa, (Haniá), Crete

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Khanéa, (Haniá), Crete***

Inscribed l.l.: *Troops exercise/Turkish music/Khanéa*, dated l.l.: *20 April 1864/22B* and further indistinctly inscribed, pen and brown ink and watercolour and pencil heightened with white
16.2 x 25 cm.; 6 5/8 x 9 3/4 inches

Provenance

Colonel Clifford Gourlay, MC (1888– 1975);
By descent to the present owners

Lear's journal records that on Wednesday 20 April he walked to Khanéa at 6.30 am and drew a little near the gate. He came across the Turkish troops exercising in the town, recording that: 'their music is amazing queer and shrieky-dissonant' (see ed. Rowena Fowler, *Edward Lear: The Cretan Journal*, 2012, p. 36). He has drawn the music, which fills the air in front of the gateway of the native bazaar, in an interesting representation of synaesthesia.

Lear drew the gate and Native Bazaar from a higher vantage point on 19th June, in a watercolour now in the collection of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Khanéa, (Haniá), Crete

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Agios Theodoros, near Platania, Crete***

Inscribed with location l.r. in Greek and dated *April 26./11 AM.*, further inscribed l.l., pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil
heightened with white
15.3 x 28.3 cm.; 6 1/8 x 11 1/4 inches

Provenance

Cyril Fry Gallery;
Gorrings, 3 December 2019, lot 368;
Where purchased by the present owner (private collection, U.K.)

Lear's diary entry for 26 April 1864 reads: 'The seashore fronting Aghios Theodhoros: sand, rox, great foaming sea. Akrotíri afar; shadowy White Mountains above nearer sandy green slope. 10.15 Corner of Aghios Théodhoros turned: promontory of Aghia Marína. Lovely breezy morning. 10.20 Stop to draw till eleven then pass it, making for the trees and the river...' (see ed. Rowena Fowler, *ibid*, p, 41).

Agios Theodoros is a small islet off the coast of Crete near Platania. Today it is a nature reserve for Cretan wild goats.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Agios Theodoros, near Platania, Crete

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Sleeping Cretans***

Pen and brown ink and watercolour, inscribed with pencil numbers l.r.
4 x 11.6 cm.; 1 5/8 x 4 5/8 inches

Lear's diary of 5th May 1864 records that he was sketching at the Lake of Kourna, 'very fine and Cumberlandish- in a nook at the foot of very high hills...11.15 Lunch is done: the wrens and titmice still sing-still. Zeriff [Turkish armed servant] hubblebubbles. The four Cretan creturs [sic] sleep, and the sun comes over the oak tree I lie beneath so I must move. Very delightful hours...'



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Sleeping Cretans

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Tarxien, Malta***

Inscribed l.l: *Tarshien./5. PM/28 March 1866./Old cactus trees below/very dark/their trunk at 8*, numbered 257 l. r. and further inscribed with colour notes, pen and grey ink and watercolour over pencil
21.2 x 38.3 cm., 8 ¼ x 15 inches

Provenance

Henry Willett (1823-1905), a friend of the artist;
By descent to the present owner

Lear arrived in Malta in December 1865. He knew that a friend and patron Sir Henry Storks, who had previously been High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands from 1859 until 1863, was now Commander-in-Chief in Malta. While Storks had, in fact, just departed, Lear stayed in Malta until April 1866.

Lear's diary records that he spent 28th March 1866 walking in the south of Malta. At 7.15 am he got a cart to Qormi (which he spelt 'Kurmi') then walked south down a valley to Siggiewi. When he got to the chapel at Zebbug at 12, Lear had to shelter from the rain under a bridge 'when the wind was like a pair of bellows.' After lunch, he continued down the valley of Zebbug between showers described it as 'extremely lonely and striking.' He made some sketches, but it was 'very cloudy and cold at times. After it cleared, we walked out of the Kurmi [Quormi] valley, & straight to Paola – the pomegranate gardens are delightful... and then to Tarrchien [Tarxien], where I got a little sketch of the buildings with their basement of Cactus. - & we walked back to the Hotel slowly, arriving at 6.45.'

Henry Willett, the original owner of this watercolour, was married to Frances Coombe, a family friend of Lear. The Coombe family lived at Peppering House, Burpham, Sussex, where Lear was a frequent visitor in the 1830s. Willett, a Sussex businessman and collector, was an early benefactor of Brighton Museum.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Tarxien, Malta

Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The Quarries of Assouan, Egypt

Extensively inscribed and dated in pencil and in pen and brown ink: *Quarries of Assouan AM 11.30- 1 PM January 27.1867 all one color [sic] pinky drab oker [sic]*, numbered (242) and with further colour notes, pen and brown ink and watercolour over pencil heightened with white
 29 x 53 cm.; 11 3/8 x 20 3/4 inches

Provenance

Mrs R.K. Judges;
 The Fine Art Society, January 1993, where bought by
 Martin Davies (1924-2023)

This beautifully drawn watercolour dates from Lear's second trip up the Nile and his third visit to Egypt in the winter of 1866-1867, when he travelled with his Canadian cousin, Archie Jones. The men met in Luxor and visited Esneh, Edfu and Denderah, and had reached Philae by the end of January. Lear found his cousin irritating due to his habit of whistling and his lack of enthusiasm for the temples.

It was nevertheless a productive trip for the artist, who made many drawings. He was particularly interested in the country between the First and Second Cataracts which was new to him. Another drawing from this trip dating from 30 January of the first Cataract is numbered 267 (formerly in the collection of Dayton International), indicating that he produced twenty-five drawings in 3 days. He wrote to Lady Waldegrave on 9th March 1867 that the Nubian desert was, 'a sad, stern, uncompromising landscape, dark ashy purple lines of hills, piles of granite rocks, fringes of palm, and ever and anon astonishing ruins of oldest temples' (Vivien Noakes, *Edward Lear: Selected Letters*, London, 1988, pp. 208-209).

This detailed view accurately depicts the ancient granite quarries at Aswan mined by the ancient Egyptians. A line of unfinished carved granite can be seen lying in the sand in the background. When the construction of the Aswan Dam began in 1960, it became apparent that the ancient temples and surrounding area would be submerged and destroyed by the rising waters of the newly created Lake Nasser. UNESCO led an international fund-raising campaign to relocate them to higher ground by 1968.

Martin Davies (1924-2023) was the President of the Egypt Society of Bristol, who visited and photographed the second cataract twice in 1960s before the Aswan Dam was moved. He amassed an interesting collection of views of Egypt.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The Quarries of Assouan, Egypt

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***The Pass of Monte D'Oro, Corsica***

Signed with monogram lower left and inscribed on reverse of mount: *Snow peaks exact & sharp off cloud/Foliage all Beech on turf/small stream in foreground*, pen and brown ink and washes and pencil heightened with touches of white, with pen and ink border
8.5 x 10.2 cm.; 3 1/4 x 4 inches

Provenance

Frances, Countess Waldegrave (1821-1879) and her third husband Chichester Fortescue, later Lord Carlingford (1823-1898)

Engraved

Edward Lear, *Journal of a Landscape Painter in Corsica*, 1870, p.161

Lear's Journal records a visit to Corsica made in the summer of 1868. It was his last travel book and the only one illustrated with wood engravings. The entry for 19th May 1868 records his response to the dramatic landscape: 'As you pass out of the woody amphitheatre which half circles Bocognano there are beautiful views looking back to the church and villages. After passing the last hamlet the ascent is steep, the road winding up always in face of the huge Monte d'Oro, divided from it by a deep hollow, narrower and clothed less with chestnut and more with "maquis" as you mount higher. The scenery of this wild pass is of a vast impressive character, but not very drawable, at least without longer time for study; on the left, the heights of Monte d'Oro are bleak and savage.'



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The Pass of Monte D'Oro, Corsica

Edward Lear (1812-1888)

The plains of Lombardy from Monte Generoso, Italy

Inscribed and dated l.l.: *Monte Generoso/1879*, and further inscribed with colour notes, pen and brown ink over pencil
25 x 51.5 cm; 9 7/8 x 20 1/4 inches

Lear returned to Varese and Monte Generoso, on the border between Italy and Switzerland between lakes Lugano and Como, from 29 June to 22 September 1879. He stayed at Mendrisio, across the Swiss border in Ticino. He enjoyed sketching the views south across the plains, as in the present drawing and the mountains stretching up to the Alps. Marianne North (1830-1890), the botanical artist, whose work can be seen in the eponymous gallery at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, came to Como towards the end of his stay, and they made a trip to Monte Civita near Monza together.

This beautiful drawing is the basis for an oil of the same subject dated 1880, which is now in the Ashmolean Museum (WA196.39).

An amusing, previously unpublished poem of seven stanzas, *The Lays of the Octopods* which explores the perils of mass tourism at the hotel Monte Generoso and features Octopods, Pofflikopps, elephants and ducks, has recently come to light in the Charnwood Autograph Collection in the British Library (Amy Wilcockson and Edmund Downey, *Notes and Queries*, Volume 67, Issue 1, March 2020, Pages 120–122).

From Monte Generoso
When the leaves were turning brown
Five hundred thousand Octopods
All painfully came down
And on the back of every one
A Pofflikopp held fast,
And all their faces dark or fair
With sorrow were o'ercast.

2
For months ago 8000 babes
Had greedily partaken,
Of red=raw beef & brandy=buff
with curried owls and bacon
And,—said the Doctors Octopod,—
“There can't be any question
That all these little innocents
Have died of indigestion!”

3
They sent for 90 Elephants
From palmy Travaneore;
And when them Elephants arrived
They sent for 90 more

Upon those Elephants they tied
The Coffins all with hay,
And on each Coffin strapped a Duck
To quack throughout the day –

4
And then a down the mountain side
All slowly they descended
Till at the gates of great Milan
The vast procession ended
To Milan, as the sun went down
In clouds of rosy flame
Those Octopods & Pofflikopps
In dust & sorrow came.

5
Four million of stout Lombard men
Came out to meet them all; –
They said, “ – We cannot have them here!
Our city is too small!
And so they dug a fearful hole
The city wall beside, –
And all the Pofflikopps jumped in
And all ~~xxxx xxxxx~~ <quite oblivious> died.

6
~~And all the Coffins & the ducks~~
Five hundred thousand Octopods
In tears, likewise, all pale & thin
Likewise the ~~ducks and Elephants~~ <coffins and
the Ducks>
Were thrown promiscuous in
And lastly all the Elephants
Majestically sad,
Jumped on the top of all the rest
With shrieks & grunts like mad.

7
And as the Lombards filled the chasm
They clashed their spades, & said
“Of Octopods & Pofflikopps, –
“Of ducks, alive or dead, –
“Of Elephants with tusks & trunks
“And skins all brown and rough,
“Of all these things,” – the Lombards sang
“Thank Heaven! We've had enough!”

Monte Generoso
22d September 1882
—Edward Lear.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
The plains of Lombardy from Monte Generoso, Italy

Edward Lear (1812-1888)***Benares, India***

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

Lear was invited to India by his friend and patron Lord Northbrook, who was appointed Viceroy in 1871. His journey there was the last and longest of his life. After leaving Lord Northbrook, Benares was one of the first places Lear visited, arriving on 12 December 1873. Lear describes Benares in his Indian Journal, on December 13-14, 1873 (*Indian Journal*, 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, [sic] sad solemn. I had always supposed this a place of melancholy or at least a staid and soberly-coloured spot, a gray [sic] 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, in which he wrote.



Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Benares, India

KAREN TAYLOR

Karen Taylor has been working with paintings and drawings for over thirty years. She works as a fine art agent and dealer, offering independent, impartial advice to collectors and museums all over the world on buying, selling and all areas of collection management.

After graduating from Brasenose College, Oxford, where she read history, she joined Sotheby's British Paintings department and spent nearly ten years there. She ran the British drawings and watercolours auctions and also specialized in topographical and travel picture sales, where she built up the Greek and Turkish areas.

In 1993 she joined Spink's picture department. Here she expanded her interest in Oriental, Indian and Far Eastern art and organised exhibitions of Orientalist pictures and twentieth century British paintings and contemporary artists. She also represented Spink at international art fairs in Basel, Maastricht, New York, Hong Kong and Singapore, amongst other places, and served on the prestigious Grosvenor House Art & Antiques Fair picture vetting committee.

Based in Sydney for several years, where she renewed her interest in Australian art, Karen headed up Spink Australia before returning to London. Since 2001 she has been running her fine art consultancy, handling British paintings and drawings of all periods, typically placing pieces privately and working with many of the world's major museums. She exhibits regularly at London fairs and holds exhibitions in St James's.

She can provide valuations for all purposes and advice on insurance, framing, conservation, lighting and display, storage and logistics.

She works by appointment in West London and is always interested in buying British paintings and drawings.



KAREN TAYLOR FINE ART

POETICAL TOPOGRAPHY

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