

PAINTING FOUND IN A GARAGE IN SUSSEX SELLS FOR £55,200 AT SOTHEBY'S SOUTH

“Now I know what it is like to be on ‘Who wants to be a Millionaire!’” says consignor.



A MAGNIFICENT oil painting found rolled up in a garage that has not seen the light of day for more than 50 years was sold for £55,200 today (Wednesday, October 25, 2000) at Sotheby's South, Billingshurst, West Sussex. It had been estimated to fetch £12,000-18,000.

The painting, by important Victorian landscape painter Sidney Richard Percy, entitled *Fording the Stream*, dated 1879, was discovered by a man, who asked not to be named, when he moved into his new home in Sussex.

The painting was found among a pile of crumbling logs, in his garage, in a long thin box known as a Blitz Box, a type of storage for paintings removed from city homes during the Second World War. Its sale attracted substantial interest on both the telephone and in the saleroom and it was eventually purchased for almost three times its higher estimate by a member of the UK trade who was bidding in the saleroom.

“I cannot believe how much it fetched!,” said the astonished consignor, “just to think the painting was covered in dust and dirt from being stored in my garage for more than 50 years and I thought it was rubbish. I had started a bonfire in the garden and I was about to throw the painting on the fire but the phone rang and I forgot to put the picture on.”

"During the sale I had butterflies in my stomach, I can now understand how the contestants on 'Who wants to be a Millionaire' feel. I haven't decided what I will do with the money...I think I will just look at it for while."

The painting was discovered by James Gadd, a paintings specialist at Sotheby's South. He said: "I am delighted with the price realised for this picture. It attracted a lot of interest, and was viewed by a large number of prospective buyers as well as conservators, so we anticipated a good result. The competitive bidding both in the room and on the telephone proved the importance of the painting, and the relative unimportance of its condition, which reflected the fact, that it had been rolled up in storage for many years. It just shows that when a good picture is fresh to the market, the sky's the limit!"

Sidney Richard Percy (1821-86) was one of the most notable landscape painters of the 19th century and is best known for his scenes of North Wales. He was a member of the Williams family, an important painting dynasty of the Victorian period, but he used the name Percy to distinguish himself from them. He lived in Redhill, in Surrey, and Sutton, in South London, in the later years of his life and exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1842 and 1886.

The painting was one of the highlights in a sale of 'Selected Oil Paintings and Watercolours' at Sotheby's South which took place on the third day of the four-day International Sale. Today's sale fetched in excess of £700,000, other notable lots included *Christmas Carol*, a delightful painting of a pack of fox hounds by John Sargent Noble RBA (1848-96) which sold for £95,400 against a pre-sale estimate of £20,000-30,000, while a collection of paintings from the studio of the Newlyn artist Norman Garstin (1847-1926) and his daughter Alethea (1894-1978) realised £89,493.

Sotheby's South is based at Summers Place, Billingshurst, West Sussex, just off the A29 and about 30 minutes drive from Gatwick Airport. It is open for free saleroom valuations, Monday – Friday between 9.30am – 4.30pm & Saturday 9.30am – 12noon. It is advisable to telephone beforehand to check that the specialist you require is available (tel: 01403 833500 for further information).

Images available by post, email or ISDN

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