

# HORDERN HOUSE

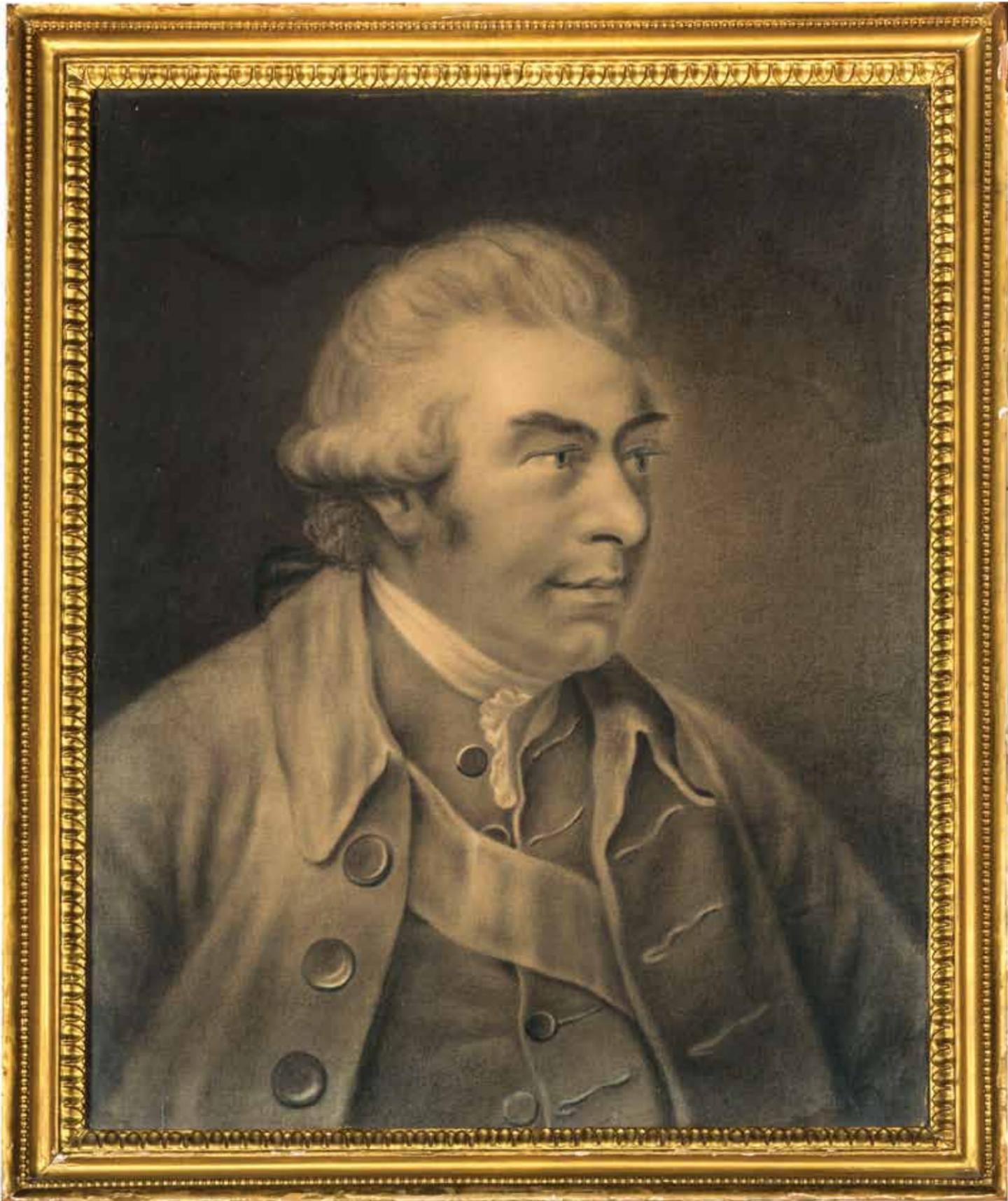
RARE BOOKS • MANUSCRIPTS • PAINTINGS

## DEPICTING SIR JOSEPH

Three images of Sir Joseph Banks

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PETTY, Amelia Susannah.

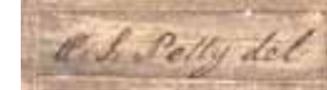
“Portrait of Sr. Joseph Banks. President of the Royal Society”  
(early caption)...

Pastel on paper backed onto linen 62 x 50cm; in the original gilt frame and glass. England, circa 1795-1800

#### BANKS'S FAVOURITE PORTRAIT, BY THE DAUGHTER OF A FRIEND

A compelling lifetime portrait of Sir Joseph Banks at the height of his powers, recently rediscovered in England. The portrait is based on a pastel John Russell RA drew in 1788, showing Banks holding a lunar map. Banks loved the Russell drawing, consenting for it to be engraved by Joseph Collyer, and later singling it out as his favoured portrait and “a most decided Likeness” (quoted in Carter, Guide, p. 306). It shows him in his prime, during the era of New South Wales and the Bounty, the rapid expansion of Kew, and the voyages of Riou and Vancouver.

In the Georgian era the practice of copying, updating and circulating portraits was widespread, and there can be no doubt that the artist of this well-executed work in crayons knew either Russell’s original or, more likely, Collyer’s version, but has removed the lunar map and updated Banks’s outfit to include the sash of the Order of the Bath, presented to Banks in July 1795. Not only has this change been very neatly contrived, it provides the likely date of composition: it is certainly not much later, given that one of the more striking aspects of the picture is that it is in the original frame, largely untouched and unrestored, with fragments of an old newspaper from 1804 that was used as paper backing.



The identity of the artist is neatly recorded on an old caption on the back of the frame as “A.S. Petty”, but no artist of that name is noted in any of the standard references of the era, which is frankly surprising given its quality. The answer turns out to be fascinating, because it must have been one Amelia Susannah Petty (abt.1767 – 2 April 1827), the only child of James Petty Esq., himself the wealthy natural son of the rather louche James Petty, Viscount Dunkeron (abt. 1713-1750) and one Elizabeth Gipps. Amelia was, that is, the great-great-granddaughter of the economist and scientist Sir William Petty. Her father, James Petty Esq. (abt. 1740-1822), was an extremely well-connected figure, who travelled widely on the Continent before settling at the grand estate of Broome Park, in Betchworth, Surrey. His connection to Banks is patent: Petty was elected to the Royal Society in 1771 and wrote his President at least one letter, from Vienna in 1784 (now NLA).

Not enough evidence has yet been unearthed to explain Amelia’s remarkable skill, but the portrait is beautifully contrived, and likely to be, given the tangled social web of Georgian England, at least partially the product of direct observation. It is likely that there was a connection between the artist Amelia Petty and John Russell, given that the latter had a small holding in Dorking, only some five kilometres down the road from the Petty family estate at Broome Park.

\$65,000

for details



ADB; *An Act to enable Sir Maurice Crosbie knight... to discharge an encumbrance on certain collieries and coal mines in the county of Durham* (1758); Beddie, *Brabourne Papers* (SLNSW); Carter, *Sir Joseph Banks... A Guide to Biographical and Bibliographical Sources* (1987); Carter, *Sir Joseph Banks* (1988); Collins, *The Peerage of England* (fourth edition); National Portrait Gallery (UK); ODNB; *Papers of Sir Joseph Banks* (NLA).



[BANKS] WEST, Sir Benjamin; mezzotinted by John Raphael SMITH.

[A proof version of the portrait of Joseph Banks, later captioned "Mr. Banks"].

Mezzotint engraving, 555 x 376 mm; mounted. [London, S. Hooper & J.R. Smith, before 15 April 1773].

### JOSEPH BANKS, RETURNED ON COOK'S ENDEAVOUR

Exceptionally rare and unrecorded artist's proof version of Benjamin West's famous portrait of Joseph Banks, differing significantly in detail from the mezzotint as subsequently published. West painted Banks in December 1771, four months after his triumphant return to England from Cook's *Endeavour* voyage. At twenty-nine years of age, it was the first "authentic" portrait of Banks, and remains one of the best of all subsequent likenesses. Appropriately, West showed him in an heroic pose wearing a Maori flax cloak and surrounded by all manner of Polynesian artefacts collected during the voyage including clubs, a paddle and a feather-handled basket.

In this early version, we can see that the engraver Smith experimented with a number of elements before finalising the plate for printing. For example the basket on the left was later changed to show, in slightly clumsy manner, an unfurled *fau* or Tahitian headdress, a rare object, one example of which Banks is known to have owned. Highlights were also added to Banks's head and shoulder, and the open book on the right was decorated. As an artist's proof, this print was made from a virtually unused plate, which explains the noticeably high quality of the impression.

There were at least three subsequent printings from the plate: the print was completed, with the changes outlined above, and issued by Hooper and Smith in mid-April 1773 with the caption "Mr. Banks". A later version published by Moltene, Colnaghi & Co. in 1788 was retitled "Sir Joseph Banks Bt." (Banks had been knighted in 1781), while another version was recaptioned to read "Sir Joseph Banks Bt. President", presumably referring to Banks's presidency of the Royal Society and perhaps indicating an issue made specifically for or on behalf of the Society. Scarce in any state, this proof version of the famous mezzotint is an exceptional rarity.

The young engraver John Raphael Smith had worked from West's original portrait to make this beautiful mezzotint, an image which Banks himself regarded as one of only three satisfactory likenesses of him to be printed. He mused that "...I doubt whether any adequate Reward was Obtained by the artist for Either of the Large [portraits], a man like me who has never meddled in Politics & who cannot of Course possess a Squadron of Enthusiastic Friends is not likely to Sell a dear Print, a Cheap one will answer better among the man of Science...".

The original West oil now hangs in the Usher Gallery in Lincolnshire, near Banks's family estates.

\$32,500

for details



Predating Beddie 4227, 4229 and 4230; Nan Kivell and Spence, p. 16 (illustrated p. 78) as published later in 1773.



[BANKS] GILLRAY, James.

**The Great South Sea Caterpillar, transform'd into a Bath Butterfly.**

Hand coloured engraving, 350 x 250 mm.; fine; mounted and framed. London, H. Humphrey, 4 July 1795.

**MAKING FUN OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS**

The rare 1795 first issue of this splendid satirical cartoon of Sir Joseph Banks, ridiculed for using the Royal Order of the Bath for self-promotion. This hand coloured engraving is by James Gillray (1756-1815) the leading English caricaturist of his time, an artist of outstanding inventiveness who continues to influence satirists today. Gillray's cruel metaphor has Banks crawling from the mud of the South Seas - referring to his participation in Cook's first voyage - to blossom in the Royal Society as a man of fame and distinction, with consequent vanity.

In the letterpress under his portrait of the great man as a metamorphosing butterfly Gillray explains his work: 'Description of the New Bath Butterfly... taken from the Philosophical Transactions for 1795. This insect first crawl'd into notice from among the Weeds & Mud on the Banks of the South Sea and being afterwards placed in a warm situation, by the Royal Society, was changed by the heat of the Sun into its present form - it is notic'd and Valued Solely on account of the beautiful Red which encircles its Body, & the Shining Spot on its Breast; a Distinction which never fails to render Caterpillars valuable...'.

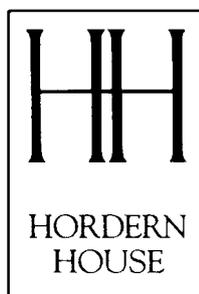
Portraits of Banks by the most famous artists of the day strengthened his position as the great statesman of science, recognised by the King for increasing Britain's scientific, imperial and commercial reputation. But as social conditions in Britain were harsh, every opportunity was taken by the leading cartoonists to attack the monarchy and the people seen to be celebrated as their appointed heroes.

This portrait is generally known by a more common version, the reprint published in the 1830s. Offered here is the original issue, one of the rarest of the eighteenth-century images of Joseph Banks "the father of Australia".

\$21,000

for details 

BM, 8718; King, *The Other Side of the Coin*, no. 2; Nan Kivell & Spence, *Portraits of the Famous and Infamous*, p. 17.



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