

First Family of English Watercolour Painting To be Celebrated at NEC's Antiques for Everyone Fair

ANTIQUES FOR EVERYONE
NEC, BIRMINGHAM B40 1NT
1 – 4 November 2007

A unique collection of early English watercolour paintings by John Varley and members of the Varley family will be an important attraction at the Antiques for Everyone fair at the NEC, Birmingham from 1 – 4 November 2007.

The collection will be shown by art dealer Patrick Payne, who runs Phoenix Fine Art from Alderley Edge, a gallery established for more than 25 years and a regular exhibitor at the NEC fair.

The display includes three typical fine quality works by John Varley, often described as the father of British watercolour painting because he set a style for so much that was to follow.

Born at the Old Blue Post Tavern, Hackney, on 17 August 1778, John Varley was briefly employed by a portrait painter in Holborn before, at the age of 15 or 16, he became a pupil of Joseph Charles Barrow (fl. 1789-1802) who had an evening drawing school twice a week at 12 Furnival's Inn Court, Holborn. It was Barrow who took Varley on a sketching tour to Peterborough from which he emerged as a professional painter. In 1798 he exhibited a highly regarded sketch of Peterborough Cathedral at the Royal Academy and became a regular exhibitor at the RA until the foundation of the Old Watercolour Society in 1805. As one of the founders of the OWS, Varley exhibited over 700 drawings. He also became a highly successful drawing master with pupils including Copley Fielding, David Cox, John Linnell and Turner of Oxford. Despite his success he was constantly in financial difficulties, "since he was both a hopeless businessman and by temperament something of a Micawber" (Huon Mallalieu).

It is less well known that John Varley also worked with William Blake, helping him to illustrate his books and poems, and that he published *A Treatise on the Principles of Landscape Drawing*, 1816-21 and *A Practical Treatise on the Art of Drawing in Perspective*. He also wrote an astrological text entitled *A Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy* in 1828.

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A Welsh River Scene, a watercolour painting by John Varley, signed and dated 1831, painted during Varley's 'middle' period when he used gum Arabic to maintain colours in original condition. Price: £2,450.

Phoenix Fine Art will also be showing examples by John Varley's eldest son, **Albert Fleetwood Varley** (a view of London's Vauxhall Bridge and Westminster) and his youngest son, **Charles Smith Varley**, plus an impressive work by his grandson, **Edgar John Varley**. It is the first time Phoenix Fine Art has assembled and shown together works by four members of the Varley family. Interest in all the paintings is expected to be strong from collectors of early English watercolour painting, often said to be an undervalued area of collecting.



A watercolour painting of Vauxhall Bridge and Westminster by Albert Fleetwood Varley. £1,450.

With exhibitors from across the UK, Europe and America, **Antiques for Everyone** is the UK's largest indoor vetted antiques fair. Achieving high standards for the quality of the fair is extremely important and the Fair's Vetting Committee devote many hours to scrutinising the exhibits to ensure the strict rules for quality and authenticity are maintained by all exhibitors. This is a most important aspect of the Antiques for Everyone fair, which is established as the most popular event of its kind in the country. More than 20,000 collectors and connoisseurs are expected to attend.

The Varley Family

The most influential member was John Varley, known particularly for his landscape watercolours. He was the eldest of five children, of whom Cornelius Varley became a scientist as well as a watercolour painter. Two other members of that generation were also active as painters: their sister Elizabeth Varley (1798–1864), who married William Mulready in 1802; and their brother William Fleetwood Varley (1785–1856), whose work is similar to that of John Varley. Of John Varley's ten children, two became painters: Albert Fleetwood Varley (1804–76) and Charles Smith Varley (1811–87). Other artists in the family were Cromwell Fleetwood Varley (1828–83), son of Cornelius; Edgar John Varley (1839–88), son of Charles Smith; and John Varley jr (1850–1933), son of Albert Fleetwood, who painted watercolours of Egypt, India and Japan.

Complimentary Tickets are available for Reader Offers and Competitions.

Please Telephone Duncan Phillips Tel: 01460 432090

PUBLIC VISITOR INFORMATION Tel: UK (0)121-767 2947.

Fair Location:

Halls 17-19, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, UK, B40 1NT.

Admission: £10.00, including free car parking.

Public Open Times 1-4 November: Thurs 11am-7pm / Fri-Sat 11am-6pm / Sun 11am-5pm

Organisers: Clarion Arts, NEC House, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham B40 1NT.

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Press Information, Images (transparencies, jpegs etc.)

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