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Colonel Mordaunt's Cock Match. At Lucknow, in the Province of Oude, in the Year 1786, at which were present several High and Distinguished Personages.

Stock#: 74504
Map Maker: Laurie & Whittle / Zoffany /
Earlom
Date: 1794
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 26 x 20 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The Defining Image of British Colonial Life in India, and One of the Most Successful Group Portraits to Ever Appear in Print.

This exceptional mezzotint by Richard Earlom captures the full effect of Johann Zoffany's original oil on canvas of a cockfight arranged by Colonel John Mordaunt, an illustrative episode in the court life of Asaf-Ud-Dowlah, the Nawab of Oudh.

Long held as one of the best illustrations of interactions between Indians and British colonials, this wonderful print combines the skills of two absolute masters of their craft; Johan Zoffany was one of the greatest portraitists of the 18th century whose oeuvre includes two of the great group portrait masterpieces of all time - the painting from which the present work was taken, and *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*; and Richard Earlom, Britain's greatest-ever mezzotinter. As such, this mezzotint can rightly be called one of the great group portraits ever put in print.

Context

The central figure of the picture, other than perhaps the cockfight itself, is the Nawab of Oudh, who is presented in a strange and somewhat buffoonish manner. The Nawab was held in very low regard by his British contemporaries, probably in large part because of his well-documented homosexuality. The man's proclivities are strongly hinted at in Zoffany's image, as he longingly looks towards Colonel Mordaunt (the thin man whose hand almost touches the Nawab's) with a hint of an erection, said to be much more



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obvious after the original painting's recent cleaning. In a letter from one of the painting's sitters to another, Claude Martin (a famous French colonial and Company School paintings collector) wrote to Ozias Humphrey commenting on the Colonel Mordaunt's relationship with the Nawab:

Colonel Mordaunt is now at the vizier's court, hunting, fighting cocks and doing all he can to please the Nabob in the expectation of being paid the large sums due to him by the Prince... although the Prince has dark and sinister intentions, but I fear much of his success, as the vizier is not much willing to pay his debts particularly to Europeans for what I know of his character I think it such that if one could read in his heart then one would perceive it loaded with many dark and sinister intentions and as you know those that compose his court you then ought to know what man he is. A man that delight in Elephant and Cocks fighting would delight in something worse if he feared nothing.

In this context, the Nawab's sexual arousal may have been a joke on the part of Warren Hastings. The combination of cockfighting (which even at the end of the 18th century was seen as lowbrow entertainment) and the allusions to proscribed sexuality, combine for a louche undercurrent that is far more than immediately meets the eye.

Zoffany included himself in the picture; he is the figure at right sitting and holding a brush while staring straight at the viewer.

Earlom made a number of mezzotints after other Zoffany group portraits, namely: *The Academicians of the Royal Academy* (1773), *The Tenth of August 1793* (1795), *The Embassy of Hyderbeck to Calcutta* (1800), and *Tiger Hunting in the East Indies* (1802).

The first state of this print was published by Robert Sayer in 1792.

The key print for the present image can be seen [here](#).

Detailed Condition:

Small blemishes and areas of faint soiling. Very few small repaired tears to the edges. A few scratches or abrasions in the image. But withal, VG.