

# . AGNEWS .

EST. 1817

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**George Smith of Chichester** (Chichester 1714-1776)

*A wooded landscape with cottages by a pool, a town beyond*

Signed 'Geo. Smith. / 1755.' (lower left)

Oil on canvas

16 ½ x 24 ⅝ in. (41.9 x 62.5 cm.)

In an English mid-18th Century carved, pierced, swept and gilded frame



## Provenance

Gloria, late Dowager Countess Bathurst until 2020.

Having begun as a portrait painter, he was encouraged as a landscape painter by Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond, and later by the Duke's son Charles, 3rd Duke of Richmond. At a time when British landscape painting was in its infancy, this patronage helped the reputations of George and his brothers William (c. 1707–64) and John (c. 1717–64) to spread throughout the country. In 1760 George won the first landscape premium offered by the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce with *Landscape* (untraced; engraved by William Woollett and published in 1762), and John won the second premium with *Landscape* (Goodwood House, W. Sussex). Both of the winning paintings cleverly combined a classical pastoral composition with the intricacies of 17th-century Dutch landscape painting. For three years the Smith brothers dominated the prizes for landscape until, in accordance with the rules, they declined to enter. The brothers were among the first artists in England to paint local scenery peopled by British gentlemen and peasants within a setting typical of Claude Lorrain. Their reputation was spread further through engravings by Woollett, William Elliott (1727–66), James Peake (1729–82), and François Vivares, many of which were exported to France. Some of the buildings in the Hameau, Versailles, bear a remarkable resemblance to the rustic cottages made popular by George Smith. A collection of the Smiths' engravings was published under the title *Picturesque Scenery of England and Wales* (London, 1769), and their work helped to create a receptive climate for later theorists of the Picturesque. The illustration of 'the

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improved' picturesque landscape in Richard Payne Knight's *The Landscape, a Didactic Poem* (London, 1794, pls I–II) is based directly on George's premium painting of 1760. The Smiths' influence on landscape gardening is often underestimated.