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EST. 1817

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Susanna Drury (Irish, c.1698 - c.1770)

A view of London from Greenwich, with the windmills of the Isle of Dogs and St Paul's Cathedral in the distance

Signed and dated: 'Sus. Drury pin/1733' (lower right) and 'S. Drury' (lower centre)

Gouache on paper

9 x 13 in. (23.4 x 33.7cm.)



Provenance

Bennett's Auction Rooms, Dublin, 2 February 1905;
With Frank Sabin, 1954;
Aldridge Bros, Worthing, where purchased by the previous owner in the early 1970s;

Literature

W. G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*, Dublin and London, 1913, p. 305.
Anne Crookshank & Desmond J. V. FitzGerald, *The Knight of Glin, The Painters of Ireland c.1660-1920*, London, 1978, p. 62.
Martyyn Anglesea and John Preston, (1980). 'A Philosophical Landscape': Susanna Drury and the Giant's Causeway', *Art History*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1980, pp. 252-273, p. 253, 264-65, fig. 14.
Anne Crookshank, *Irish Watercolours and Drawings: Works on Paper c.1600-1914* (Abrams, 1995), p. 32.

The present work is a remarkable early view of London as seen from a viewpoint in Greenwich. Below the viewer, just beyond the trees, is St. Alfege Church, built by Nicholas Hawksmoor in 1712, with St. Paul's church, Deptford, beyond; finished in 1730. In the distance, across the River Thames, St Paul's Cathedral rises above the City of London.

Susanna Drury was from a Dublin family of Anglo-Irish ancestry that can be traced back to Elizabethan times. Although little is known of her life, she was influential in the early development of topographical landscape painting, particularly in Ireland, and European scientific illustration. Given Drury's comparatively

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small body of work, this landscape is extremely rare, being her only known depiction of London and only dated work.

Described as a 'young gentlewoman', Drury was one of the first amateur women artists who 'strove to avoid social derogation by turning her skills with pencil and brush to profit'¹. She enjoyed considerable success as an artist, notably winning a £25 premium 'for the encouragement of the arts' from the board of the Dublin Society Drawing Schools in 1740 for her two 1739 views in gouache of the Giant's Causeway, County Antrim - the first trustworthy views of the landmark ever produced (figs. 1 & 2). These watercolours of the Giant's Causeway, in the collection of the Ulster Museum, Belfast, were widely disseminated through engravings and helped bring international attention to the site. The groups of fashionably dressed figures in both of Susanna Drury's paintings show that as early as 1739 the Giant's Causeway had become a tourist attraction, however, after Drury executed her watercolours, this landmark became well known throughout Europe as her views were engraved by one of the most accomplished engravers of the day, François Vivares. No reference to the Causeway is known before the last decade of the 17th Century, but during the 18th Century the site became a source of great interest amongst natural scientists owing to the debate over the origin of crystalline rocks. Drury's views played an important role in settling the debate between natural scientists, over the origin of the crystalline rocks, by providing the first useful and detailed depictions of the basalt structure which geologists could use for research and discussion. Another pair of views of the Giant's Causeway were once in the collection of the Duke of Leinster at Carton House, Co. Kildare, Ireland and bear the plaque associated with the collection².

¹ T.C. Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure, Lives and Possessions in Ireland 1641-1770*, Newhaven and London, 2004, p. 164.

² These works were subsequently sold at Christies, London, 7 May 2009, lot 14.

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Fig. 1: Susanna Drury, *West Prospect of the Giant's Causeway*, c.1739, gouache on vellum, Ulster Museum, Belfast, National Museums Northern Ireland.



Fig. 2: Susanna Drury, *East Prospect of the Giant's Causeway*, c.1739, gouache on vellum, Ulster Museum, Belfast, National Museums Northern Ireland.

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From contemporary correspondence, it appears that Drury was meticulous in her approach and understanding of the geological formations, and 'lived three months near [Giants Causeway], and went [there] almost every day' (Barnard, *loc. cit.*). We can observe the same detail to the topographical view in the present gouache of London. The early eighteenth century is a relatively uncharted period in the history of painting in Ireland and if Susanna Drury learned her skills in Dublin, the most likely influence would perhaps be William van der Hagen (d. 1745) who appears to have been in Ireland from the early 1720s onward. He painted views of towns, shipping and theatrical scenery, and his *View of Waterford* painted in 1736, is certainly stylistically comparable to Susanna Drury's *A view of London from Greenwich* (fig. 3). However, the fact that her only dated work, of 1733, is a London view, raises the possibility that Susanna Drury received her training in London. Her highly detailed technique suggests that she may have trained as a miniature painter, as did her brother Franklin Drury. Similarities to the French miniaturist Joseph Goupy (1689-1769) have been observed, particularly with her later use of vellum as a medium, and it is possible that she trained with him at some stage in London during the 1720s and 1730s where he was teaching draughtsmanship. Joseph Goupy was a French Huguenot engraver, painter, set designer, and watercolourist. His panoramic watercolour views of Malta belonging to the Marquis of Lothian, are similar in treatment to Susanna Drury's view of London (fig. 4 & 5).

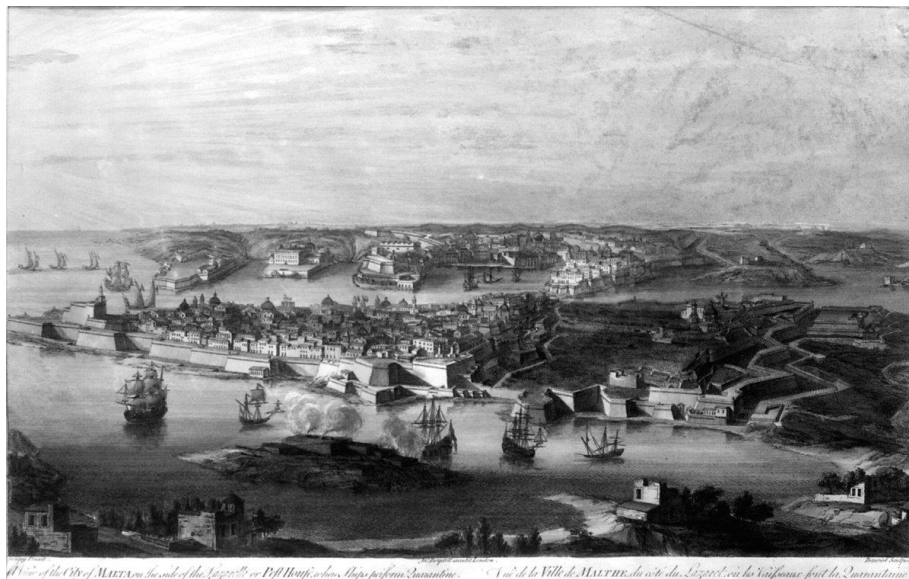


Fig 3: William van der Hagen, *View of Waterford*, 1736, Bishops Palace, Waterford.

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Figs 4 & 5: Joseph Goupy, *A View of the Port and Entrance of the City and Isle of Malta* and *A View of the City of Malta on the Side of the Lazaretto, or Pest House, where Ships Perform Quarantine.*

This link between Susanna Drury and the French Huguenots was later seen again when Dean Gabriel Maturin, a member of one of the most illustrious Dublin Huguenot families, revealed Susanna Drury's identity to the board of the Dublin Society in 1740 (presumably she was obliged by her sex to submit her paintings anonymously), allowing her to win the prize for her views of the Giant's Causeway.

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Her highly detailed observation provides us with a fascinating early record of London landscape and architecture. In the present work, the windmills that once lined the shore of the Isle of Dogs can be seen executed with extraordinary detail in the middle ground and it is these that gave Millwall its name. The mills were used for grinding corn from the surrounding fields but were demolished by the early 19th century as Millwall turned from a farming peninsula to the heart of London's ship-building industry. Today it is even more unrecognisable, as the regeneration of the 1980s saw the building of Canary Wharf. Below, we can further discern St. Alfege Church, an Anglican church in the centre of Greenwich, which is of medieval origin and was rebuilt in 1712–1714 to the designs of Nicholas Hawksmoor, a relatively new addition to the landscape when the work was drawn. In comparison with earlier paintings from similar viewpoints in Greenwich, such as Jan Griffier's 1690 *London and the River Thames from One Tree Hill, Greenwich Park*, we can see the development of the urban landscape (fig. 6). In the background, we can see Griffier's impression of what the new St. Paul's dome would look like. Construction of Sir Christopher Wren's new Cathedral began in 1675, after the damage in the Great Fire of London of 1666, and was completed in 1711, 22 years before Susanna Drury completed this gouache. In a 1680 painting by Johannes Vorsterman the artist celebrates the remodelling of Greenwich Park in the 17th century, with the addition of the Royal Observatory, built in 1675 and the avenue of trees created for Charles II in the 1660s (fig. 7). Neither of these pictures show the windmills on the Isle of Dogs, which we can see in our painting, as these were constructed only in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. In both these paintings, as well as our work by Susanna Dury, all three artists have included deer on the right of the composition, a legacy of the park's use as Royal hunting grounds in the 17th century. While the view that Drury looked out on has changed substantially, there are some buildings, such as St. Alfege Church and St Paul's Cathedral, which have endured, despite being relatively recently built at the time the painting was executed.

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Fig 6: Jan Griffier, *'London and the River Thames from One Tree Hill, Greenwich Park'*, 1690, Royal Museums Greenwich.



Fig. 7: Johannes Vorstermans, *Greenwich and London from One Tree Hill*, circa 1680, Queens House, Greenwich.

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Our gouache is even more compelling given the social constraints for woman artists in the 1730s in Great Britain and Ireland. Women faced considerable barriers in pursuing careers as artists, largely due to the social expectations and limitations on women's education. While there were no formal laws against women becoming artists, societal norms restricted their opportunities. Art education in the early 18th century was primarily accessible through apprenticeships, often within male-dominated guilds or institutions, and as women were generally excluded from these avenues it limited their ability to receive formal artistic training. Women were restricted even their ability to purchase painting materials and although it was encouraged as a hobby, making a living as an artist was a different matter as T.C. Barnard notes in *Making the Grand Figure, Lives and Possessions in Ireland 1641-1770*:

*'As in architecture, so in painting, to learn the theory and how to judge the works was approved. But to become a devilling practitioner threatened to lower the adept to the status of craftworker or mechanic. In consequence, there was a reluctance to trade these artistic skills, although need reconciled some of gentle birth....Susannah Drury...to doing so'*³

Although the recognition and inclusion of women in the arts began to improve gradually in the latter half of the 18th century, in the early decades when Susanna Drury was painting it would have been seen as bold. Susanna Drury, in signing and dating her work as early as 1733, demonstrates a rare and admirable show of confidence as a woman attempting to make a name for herself as an artist.

³ T.C. Barnard notes in *Making the Grand Figure, Lives and Possessions in Ireland 1641-1770*, Newhaven and London, 2004, p. 165.