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**SYDNEY LOUGH THOMPSON**

1877 - 1973

*Mending the Nets, Staithes*

Oil on canvas board 30 x 39.5

Signed

8,000 - 12,000

Provenance:

Private Collection, Canterbury since Circa 1947

*Staithes - An inspiration to every painter that came* - Dame Laura Knight

In 1900 the 23 year old Sydney Thompson, departed New Zealand for London. For the past five years he had studied at the Canterbury College of Art, Christchurch under Petrus Van der Velden, who in turn had been a pupil of Van Gogh's before he immigrated to New Zealand. On inheriting a considerable sum of money, Thompson enrolled at the Heatherley School of Art, London. Tiring, after a year, of the strict art college routine he spent time at the artists' colony in Staithes, Yorkshire, before leaving England in 1901 for the Academy Julian in Paris.

Staithes was one of several artists colonies which had developed in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. Since the 1880s British painters, having worked in the colonies of Brittany, began settling in fishing villages in their own country. From the end of the nineteenth century, paintings portraying the close-knit, seafaring way of life, were successfully received at London shows of the New English Art Club and the Royal Academy. Thompson would have seen his first Academy exhibition with paintings depicting home moorings, the mending and drying of nets and the sturdily built fishing boats.

Thompson made Staithes his painting pitch. The advent of the railway made it readily accessible, with visitors delivered to a nearby station, from where they descended down a narrow track to the small village below. What attracted painters to Staithes were its picturesque qualities, old houses with red-tiled roofs, the postcard like setting of the trestle bridge spanning the stream, fishing boats and the local fisherfolk.

During Thompson's time in Staithes the village had two well known residents, artists Laura and Harold Knight. During the summer Thompson and his painting companion, Charles Bickerton spent in Staithes they were introduced to its maritime subject matter - a recurring theme throughout Thompson's life. This was his first experience working in an artists colony, and it introduced him to a pattern of existence which became a way of life, continuing with the many years he spent painting in Brittany.

*Mending the Nets, Staithes* is a rare and recently discovered work from this period.