Basic Detail Report



The Rake's Progress 8

Date
1735

Primary Maker
William Hogarth

Medium
Etching and engraving

Description
A Rake's Progress Plate VIII Scene in a Madhouse 1735. Etching and Engraving. 36.4 x 41.2 cm State 2. Engraver: William Hogarth (1697-1764) Below Plate: Invented, & Painted, by Wm. Hogarth & Published June ye. 25. 1735 According to Act of Parliament Poulson 139 PT1106 In the final scene of the series we see Tom Rakewell reduced to madness. He is in the Bethlehem Hospital, the infamous asylum known as "Bedlam". Tom violently scratches the side of his head while a prison warden chains his leg. The faithful Sarah Young is by his side trying to comfort him while being molested by another warden who is trying to remove her shawl. This particular image is among Hogarth's greatest and most damning indictments of 18th century society. Some of Hogarth's characters in this engraving have been driven mad by love, science and religion. Behind Tom and Sarah one man tries to study the stars through a paper tube believing it is a telescope. Another man standing behind a cell door scribbles geometric calculations on the wall. A tormented, man worships a cross as light streams through the barred window of his cell. In cell number 55 a deluded man sits naked believing he is the King, outside this cell door a mad tailor plays with his tape measure. A delusional man believes he is the Pope. Beside him a musician tries to play his violin with a stick wearing a book of sheet music on his head. Sitting on the steps is a man who has been driven mad by his love for the "Charming Betty Careless", a famous prostitute of the day, whose name he has carved into the banister. Most disturbing, however, are the two, pretty aristocratic ladies who have come to view the suffering of the insane as a form of entertainment. Another example of the "foolish" social climber Tom, being ridiculed by the aristocracy that he's spent all of his money trying to join. Almost thirty years (1763) after completing A Rake's Progress, Hogarth returned to this final plate and made one significant addition. On the wall he etched an image of a halfpenny portraying Britannia with her hair wildly flying behind her. Within the lower margin he also wrote, "Retouch'd by the Author, 1763." In the last year of his life, Hogarth clearly felt that Britain and its ruling classes had not improved.

Dimensions
Object/Work: 364 x 412 mm