

Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

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Unusual Watercolour of an Interior with a Costume Ball, dated 1861

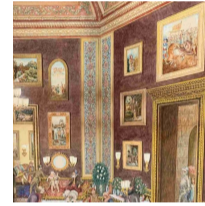
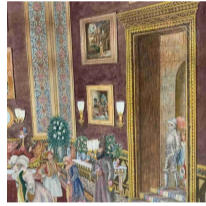
showing guests in costume in a grand Regency interior;
signed with initials - GLS - and with the date 1861

SKU: B4647

Height: image: 46.6cm (18 1/4in); overall 48cm (19in)

Width: image: 31cm (12 1/4in); overall 43cm (17in)

Year: 1861



It is tempting to imagine this shows a ball in one of the great, now lost, London Houses of the aristocracy like Londonderry House, Devonshire House etc., though it is difficult to tie it in with any known house except, possibly, Grosvenor House, the interiors of which, apart from the Picture Gallery, are not well recorded. In December 1861 Prince Albert, the prince consort, died, which ushered in a period of court mourning with few celebrations. The Queen and her prince consort had famously given a great costume ball at Buckingham Palace in 1842, partly to give a fillip to the Spitalfields silk industry. Other well-documented 19th century costume balls were given by the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House in the 1870s and by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire at Devonshire House in 1897

The depiction of a stone hall, unusual in London Houses, makes it also possible that it shows a great Regency country house, though balls of this sort were more often given in London at this date because of the difficulty of access in the country. The table to the left of the door is remarkably like one of a pair designed by Robert Adam for the Earl of Jersey's London House at 38 Berkeley Square, moved in 1806/7 to their country house, Middleton Park in Oxfordshire. In 1861 the Earl's eldest daughter, Julia Child-Villiers, married Sir George Orby Wombwell, which might have been the occasion for a ball. Middleton Park was demolished and replaced by a house designed by Edwin Lutyens.