

DUKE STREET GALLERY

INFORMATION SHEET



CHARLES TOWNE (1763–1840)
STALLIONS

Oil on Panel, Signed
12" x 16"

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Charles Towne
1763-1840

Born in Wigan in 1763, the third child of Robert and Mary Town. Thirty six years later he added an 'e' to his surname. As a child, Charles showed a precocious talent and is recorded as selling drawings of animals at the tender age of eight. Four years later Charles walked from Wigan to Leeds a distance of near 60 miles, to join the studio of John Rathbone. There he learned the rudiments of landscape painting and first became aware of the 17th century Dutch Masters; those formal landscapes with the hallmark contrasts of open space and towering trees. These compositions appealed enormously to Charles Towne as being the perfect settings for his paintings of horses, dogs and animals in general and he started to bring such settings into his composition, after 1790.

By 1780 Charles was in Liverpool with his elder brother, who was a coachpainter. There he learned the craft of japanning, became a coachpainter for a while and married a widow, Margaret Harrison, in 1785. George Stubbs proved another massive influence on Charles Towne's direction as did Philip de Loutherbourg, whose studio Towne visited in London in 1797.

Charles divided his time between Liverpool and Manchester during this period, finding work and commissions from the wealthy gentry of Cheshire and Lancashire. He lived in London for five years from 1799, which was when he added the 'e' to his name. He began to exhibit at the Royal Academy where he met George Morland, a founder member of that establishment. Unfortunately, Charles began to emulate Morland's lifestyle and although he was recorded as earning £600 a year in 1798, he was spending his income as fast as he earned it. By 1810 Charles Towne had returned to Liverpool where he became a founder member of the Liverpool Academy and served as its vice-president 1812-1813. He exhibited sporadically there (1810-1813 and 1822-1825) and at the Royal Manchester Institution 1827-1833. Interestingly, he also took on picture cleaning and restoration from 1813. Charles Towne died in Liverpool in 1840 and he is represented in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.