

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



William Simpson (Glasgow, Scotland 1823 - Willesden, England 1899)

William Simpson Watercolour depicting Chittorgarh Fort

Rajasthan, India, 19th century

Watercolour on paper

14.5cm high, 21.5cm wide

Stock no.: A5621

A scene depicting a view of the famous fort at Chittor, Rajasthan. The fort stands on a hill and acted as a complex; it also served as the capital of Mewar. Within the fort lie several temples and water tanks. This painting pays close attention to the architectural structures whilst also depicting the landscape in an evocative way. The walls above and the recessed temple structure below highlight the fact that the structure is built on a hill. The detail of the stonework of the walls and the *chattris* (cupolae), as well as the texture of the rock face, are given particular attention.

Although the watercolour is not signed, the style of painting closely resembles that of the Scottish artist William Simpson, who was born in Glasgow on 28 October 1823. Simpson's London employers, the lithography firm De La Rue, commissioned him to travel around India sketching well-known sites. He spent time in and around Delhi, sketching battle damage inflicted during the Siege of Delhi. He arrived in Calcutta in 1859, travelling and sketching before returning to London in 1862. In his autobiography, he mentions a sojourn in Rajasthan (Rajpootana), first to Udaipur (Oodeypore) and then to Chittorgarh (Chittore Ghur). He describes the latter, saying 'this place is a masterpiece of architecture' and refers to the 'flat topped hills.'¹ It is thus possible that this watercolour was painted during his time in Chittorgarh.

Other Simpson paintings and watercolours from this time, in his inimitable style, can be viewed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The highly detailed architectural work in combination with the slightly grainy texture created by the wet paint is mirrored in a painting of the Kailasantha temple at Ellora (accession no. [1167-1869](#)). A painting of a landscape shows very similar attention to the rocky outcrops (see, for example, accession nos [D.630-1](#) and [1900](#)).

Though this watercolour is unsigned and undated, of Simpson's 248 recognised works, 35 have no signature.

further 19 have neither date nor signature. Amongst these are a series of watercolours completed during India, including studies of members of the Bengal Infantry and Cavalry, a view of the Malabar Hill in Bombay and a painting of Fort Agra. Furthermore, he documented the British Eclipse Expedition at Bekal, in an unsigned sketch of 1871.²

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

¹ Simpson, William. *The Autobiography of William Simpson, R.I.* Edited by George Eyre-Todd. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1903. pp. 139-140

² 'William Simpson list of paintings', The Mitchell Library, retrieved from <https://libcat.csghlasgow.org/documents/836643/988153/William+Simpson+Collection+list+of+paintings+4147-42f8-a1e0-5d0ed4f41d64>