



JAMES JACQUES JOSEPH TISSOT

(Nantes, 1836 - Chenecey-Buillon, 1902)

Kathleen Newton

oil on canvas

699 x 514 mm

Provenance:

Artist's studio sale, Hotel Drouot, 9-10 July 1903, no. 3 ('Portrait')

Private collection, France

The extraordinary story of the vivacious Irish beauty Kathleen Newton (1854 - 82) appears to be taken from the pages of a novel. Born in India, she was married briefly there to a man twice her age. With two children born out of wedlock, she met Tissot while living with her sister in North London. In 1877, scandalously for the time, she moved in with him. For the next five years almost all of his pictures were of, or featured her. Tissot's biographer described her as "a ravishing Irish woman, delightful, educated and distinguished, tall and slim, with superb blue eyes and long golden hair". The idyll did not last for Kathleen died of tuberculosis in November 1882, aged just twenty eight. This is possibly the artist's most intimate portrayal of his muse and romantic obsession.

One of Tissot's most famous pictures of Kathleen Newton is "Quiet", exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1881. It depicts Kathleen on a bench in the garden at Tissot's house in Grove End Road with her daughter Muriel and a pet dog (this painting was recently acquired by the National Museum of Northern Ireland in Ulster). 'Quiet' was painted from our sketch of Kathleen, where she is in a similar pose. In the larger painting, she is wearing the same daring blue dress, without the blue satin cap but with a red

flower in her corsage, which only seems to accentuate the plunging neckline. Our painting was not intended for exhibition, and so not finished or signed.