



Gallery Notes

SUMMER 2017

JOHN MITCHELL
FINE PAINTINGS

EST 1931

This year's *Gallery Notes* illustrates more than ever the rich pickings available in the diverse field of European picture collecting. Our selection this summer covers four centuries, with Dutch and Flemish artists accounting for the 17th century, a moving Penitent Magdalene by the Haarlem Classicist **Pieter de Grebber**, and a recently rediscovered flower piece by **Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer**. The 18th century is dominated by English artists using several different mediums, granting us a broad view of the diverse achievements of the 'Golden Age' of British Art. The earliest are an exceptional 'bodycolour' of Eton College by **Paul Sandby**, and two beautifully fresh marine watercolours from his pupil's brother **Robert Cleveley**. By **John Russell** we have a pastel portrait of the five year old Lady Henrietta Cavendish, a picture whose charm is only surpassed by its miraculous condition. *The Falls at Tivoli* by **Julius Caesar Ibbetson** gives us a glimpse into the 'Grand Tour' aspirations of the age. Ibbetson will be the focus of a special exhibition at our gallery in December to mark the bicentenary of his death. The Italian campagna continues to stir the imagination in Jean-Victor Bertin's neoclassical landscape, a never-before-seen work that has lain dormant in a private French collection until today. The Swiss romanticist **Johann Jakob Frey** makes his *Gallery Notes* debut with a lively oil sketch of that most romantic of motifs, a lightning-struck oak tree. The work of **Alfred Stevens** and **Antoine Guillemet** require little introduction, given our regular association with their work, and this year's offering by both artists continues to prove their consistent quality. And more recently, **Jean Dufy's** distinctive *École de Paris* style brings a blast of 20th century colour and eccentricity to this year's selection.

We are consistently reminded by the wearisome marketing campaigns of international auction houses that being 'old' no longer confers the dignity on art that previous generations admired; rather, 'antiqueness' has become taboo, noisome, something to be shed, not revered. Even the term 'Old Master' is used with a cautious reluctance for fear that it might highlight the very thing that makes an antique painting fascinating. I would contest that, to hold in your hands a beautiful unique painting, that an artist in a distant time and place has toiled over; that has been cherished by centuries of previous owners; that has proved itself to posterity and been validated by scholarship, is to be in direct communion with the past, and for those that know, that is the greatest privilege of all. The recurring argument that the supply of top quality antique artworks has all but dried up seems a little redundant given the rediscovery in France of both a major Caravaggio painting and a Leonardo drawing, in the last year alone. The same can be said of our (if a little more modest!) selection, and it is a continual delight and surprise to find and revive these beautiful paintings, some that have languished in obscurity for centuries.

Our objective in selecting these works has been, as ever, the pursuit of paintings of the finest quality and condition. The strong holdings by both national and international museums of all the artists in this catalogue is validation enough of their importance. A fuller appreciation of a picture will be made if the context in which it was created is understood. For that reason, this catalogue seeks to inform and entertain the reader, and to place our paintings within the broader field of European art. We are always on hand to discuss and offer advice on the acquisition, conservation and sale of paintings, drawings and watercolours, and we look forward to sharing our new selection with you this summer at our gallery and at *Masterpiece 2017* (29 June-5 July).

James Astley Birtwistle

June 2017

EXHIBITING AT
MASTERPIECE
2017 | LONDON
 29 JUNE - 5 JULY PREVIEW 28 JUNE
 STAND B17

Pieter Fransz. de Grebber (c.1600-1653)*Mary Magdalene at Prayer*

oil on canvas
 25½ x 20½in (64.6 x 51cm)
 with original seventeenth century English frame

PROVENANCE

The Watson Collection, Holyrood House, East Riding, Yorkshire until 1957.
 By descent, A. Alec-Smith, Winestead, East Riding, Yorkshire.

De Grebber belonged to a group of Dutch painters who specialized in historical and religious scenes, known as the Haarlem Classicists. Their work is often considered in the context of the more unsung or, if that is possible, the unexplored side of painting in the Dutch Golden Age.

In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue for *Dutch Classicism in seventeenth-century painting*¹, the veteran Dutch art historian, Albert Blankert aptly wrote: 'It may seem improbable that any blank spaces could still remain on the map of the so well-travelled and well-researched field of seventeenth-century Dutch painting. And even should such blank spaces be found, the likelihood of their containing anything remarkable or interesting would appear negligible.'

This newly-discovered *Mary Magdalene at Prayer* may thus seem, superficially, a rather un-Dutch subject; neither realist, Mannerist nor strictly Caravaggist, but its intimate and devotional appeal is perhaps the epitome of so-called Haarlem Classicism.

The son of an art dealer and Haarlem painter, Frans Pietersz. de Grebber (1573-1643), young Pieter was taught by the leading printmaker, painter and exponent of Northern Mannerism, Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617). Frans de Grebber was also an agent for Rubens and in 1618 the teenage de Grebber travelled with his father to Antwerp and met the great Flemish master. He joined the Haarlem Guild in 1632, whereafter he began to focus more on religious scenes than history paintings and create new iconographic interpretations of Christian themes². As a devout Catholic, de Grebber had close connections with fellow worshippers, and his portraits, notably of priests and nuns, were celebrated in his time for their anatomical skill. De Grebber not only prospered from his painting but gained wide renown for his innovative religious paintings which were aligned with the wider European current of the Counter-Reformation. In a country where Calvinism became the de facto religion, the

¹ *Dutch Classicism in seventeenth-century painting*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. September 1999- January 2000 and the Staedelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt. February -April 2000.

² See for example *God inviting Christ to sit on the throne at his right hand*. Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.



tolerances towards different religious groups such as Jews and the Mennonites were, perhaps, more flexible than with the Catholic communities, especially at the time when de Grebber was establishing himself as a painter of devotional, religious images in the 1620s and 1630s. The history of religious tolerance in the seventeenth-century Netherlands is a complex subject and, as with the diverse schools of painting, it varied from province to province and city to city.

Mary Magdalene at Prayer was one of de Grebber's many private commissions which may well have been destined for a small place of worship in Haarlem or a *schuilkerk* (hidden church). With her traditionally long flowing, blond hair Mary is shown without any of the customary symbols of her former life or her reformation from sin: penance. This three-quarter length portrait focuses on the saint's crossed hands, delicately clasped to her chest as her gaze is cast upwards. The painting conveys great emotion and its gold and silvery palette of colours, so characteristic of the 'Haarlem' school, suffuses the composition with a shimmering, celestial light.

In its desire to correspond as faithfully as possible to the narrative; to offer an authentic and stylistically precise version of an elevated subject, this painting retains a wholly Dutch character. De Grebber and his fellow guildsmen, whether considered necessarily within the Haarlem Classicist fraternity or not, were master painters worthy in every aspect of the same status as those well-loved artists of today, long associated with images of domestic life, beach scenes, still life and genre interior pictures, the Dutch Old Masters.

In conclusion, Dr. Blankert's statement seems even more persuasive:
'We wish to draw attention to a trend in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, which has hitherto been known only superficially or marginally to insiders, and to show a wide survey of it. We believe that many of the creations of the classicist painters are of outstanding artistic quality.'

WJM





Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (1634-1699)
Flowers in a Glass Vase

oil on canvas
15 x 11½in (38 x 29cm)

Monnoyer's extravagant and sumptuous style captured the imagination of his illustrious patrons both in France and in England. In 1665 Monnoyer joined the Academy in Paris where his talent was recognized by Charles Le Brun, then King Louis XIV's minister for arts. Monnoyer's opulent arrangements of flowers derived from a personal interpretation of the Baroque Italian and Flemish still lifes he had seen as an apprentice in either Lille or more likely Antwerp. Much of Monnoyer's fame came from the harmony he found between great technical craftsmanship and the decorative role of flower painting. Together with Le Brun the ambitious flower painter first worked in French palaces such as Vincennes, Versailles, Trianon, Marly and Meudon to such success that his still lifes came to represent the official royal taste - an expression of the Sun King's rich reign. Monnoyer also produced countless designs for the royal Gobelins and Beauvais tapestry manufactories which would inevitably widely publish and diffuse his style throughout the land.

Through Ralph Montagu, the English ambassador to Louis XIV, Monnoyer was persuaded to visit England in 1690 to collaborate with other French painters on the decoration of Montagu House in Bloomsbury, London. The 'Francophile' Montagu's decision to commission Monnoyer effectively enhanced the French artist's now international status so much that he never returned to France. Working for the royal household at Hampton Court, Burlington House, Windsor Castle and Kensington Palace, Monnoyer would also gain many admirers among the English aristocracy. When Montagu House became the British Museum in 1754 many of Monnoyer's paintings were transferred to Boughton House in Northamptonshire, home of the Montagus' descendants, the Dukes of Buccleuch, where they remain in situ today. It was a visit to Montagu House that prompted the eighteenth-century French art historian, Antoine-Nicholas d'Argenville, to write of Monnoyer: 'his talent has earned the respect and admiration of all art lovers; he brings to everything he paints a freshness and truth so perfect that one is convinced that these beautiful flowers lack nothing but the scent they seem to exhale. Whatever is painted by this great artist, beloved of the Muses, has been taken directly from nature. He reproduces every detail, down to the dew which forms on flowers at the break of day and lives on throughout the day.'

WJM



Paul Sandby (1731-1810)

A view of Eton College from Crown Corner, Windsor, with stonemasons at work in the foreground

15¼ x 21½in (38.2 x 54.6cm)

Inscribed on the verso of the mount: *This and three other views of Windsor were clean'd, and repar'd for Sr. Wlm. Parsons in the year – 1813 by /his friend. Jno. Milward of Artillery Place/ Finsbury Square*

PROVENANCE

Sir William Parsons before 1813;

John Carbonnell, Esq.,

Sotheby's, 14 March 1962, lot 43, where bought by Leggatts for The Earl of Inchcape; thence by descent.

LITERATURE

Andrew Clayton Payne Ltd., London, current website catalogue of 'Notable sales', where referred to under entry for Paul Sandby, *Eton College from the River Thames*

This remarkable bodycolour painting belongs to a large group of views in and around Windsor produced by Paul Sandby in the 1760s and 1770s, and indeed at one time belonged to a set of four views owned by Sir William Parsons in 1813 (see PROVENANCE). Upon his return from Scotland in the late 1740s, Sandby spent much of his time sketching at Windsor, where his brother Thomas's employer, the Duke of Cumberland, was Ranger of the Great Park from 1746 onwards, and it is no exaggeration to say that views of Windsor became a mainstay of Sandby's exhibited works, proving popular with critics.

Sandby captures this view across the south bank of the River Thames from Crown Corner, Windsor. On the river a barge sails past Eton, and in the foreground a mother and child walk up the bank while three stonemasons cut and chisel stone. The mason on the far left, seated at one end of a huge block of stone, also appears in Sandby's drawing of *Windsor, East view from Crown Corner*, at the British Museum (accession no 1878,0713.1280). Perhaps the best known version of this vista of Eton from across the River Thames is at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, Niveson loan (gouache, 21¼ x 30½in, c. 1790) and exhibited in *The Great Age of British Watercolours 1750-1880*, January-July 1993, London, R.A., and Washington, National Gallery of Art, no. 256, col. pl. 51. A third version (watercolour, 12¼x 19¼ in, signed and dated 1779) was recently with Andrew Clayton-Payne, London (see LITERATURE).

John Russell, RA (1745–1806)

Portrait of Lady Henrietta Elizabeth Cavendish, younger daughter of William, fifth Duke of Devonshire, aged five, later Harriet Leveson-Gower, Countess Granville (1785-1862)

pastel on paper, laid down on canvas
signed and dated 'Russell R A pt./ 1790' (lower left)
23 x 17in (58.5 x 43.2cm)
with original frame

PROVENANCE

In the collection of the sitter;
by descent to her son, the Hon. Frederick Leveson-Gower (1819-1907);
with Grafton Gallery, London W1;
Charles Wertheimer (1842-1911);
Alfred Sussmann, his sale, Paris, Georges Petit, Lair-Dubreuil, 18-19 May 1922, lot 51;
Arthur Forbes, 9th Earl of Granard (1915-1992), and by descent;

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, 1790, no. 118, *Portrait of a young lady of quality*;
Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 1908, *Exposition de cent Pastels du XVIII siècle*, no. 115;

LITERATURE

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800* (Unicorn Press 2006), p.449, illus.

Pastels have featured prominently in *Gallery Notes* of recent years, and the tradition is continued with this tender portrait of a five year-old girl. John Russell therefore needs no introduction, other than as a fashionable portrait painter in late eighteenth-century London who perfected the art of pastels. He is also highly regarded for his painstaking drawings of the moon which he observed obsessively over twenty years, and the value of which can be measured by the recent sale at Christie's for over £100,000 of a pair of engravings after his originals.

Russell was industrious, and even today his portraits are not rare. However very few are as well-preserved as this one, which has suffered neither from losses (where the pastel falls away from the paper) or the unsightly discolouration of pigments. As the fragile nature of pastel does not lend itself in any way to restoration, they are by their nature very much as one finds them. Every detail here remains crisp, Russell's lively draughtsmanship is seen throughout the composition and the remarkable state of preservation permits us to enjoy this portrait as it would have looked upon completion.

Alongside our pastel at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1790 would have hung the artist's likeness of Lady Georgina, Henrietta's sister, also entitled *Portrait of a young lady of quality*. Their mother was the famous socialite and political hostess, Lady Georgiana Spencer. Henrietta would later marry Granville Leveson-Gower, 1st Earl Granville, and became a noted figure in Parisian society during her husband's service as ambassador to France between 1824 and 1841. His portrait by Thomas Lawrence hangs in the Yale Center for British Art (B1981-25736).





A



B

Robert Cleveley (1747-1809)

An Admirals' Conference off the Isle of Wight – a pair (2)

watercolour on wove paper

one sheet bearing watermark and date 'J RUSE/1799'

11¼ x 18¾in (28.5 x 47.6cm)

with fine period carved and gilded English frames

These are perhaps the finest watercolours by Robert Cleveley known today, and have come to light in a private collection in the United States. In size, accomplishment and condition they surpass any of those in the collections of the National Maritime Museum, the British Museum, the V&A and the Yale Center for British Art, while the majesty of the subject matter will have endless appeal to enthusiasts of the great age of sail. Cleveley's familiarity with his subject and his superb technique with the medium come together in this pair to remarkable effect and, from the collector's point of view, the singular school of English marine drawing does not come much better than this.

Robert Cleveley invariably features in any survey of British sea painters, as does his twin brother John (1747-1786), and yet little is known about his life other than the oft-repeated anecdote that he left his work as a caulker in Deptford dockyard to go to sea. Certainly in the 1780s he was marine painter to the Duke of York, as well as marine draughtsman to the Duke of Clarence, producing watercolours associated with various visits made by this latter, the third son of George III. Perhaps the highpoint of his career, the exhibition in Bond Street of his paintings of Howe's victory on 'The Glorious 1st of June' in 1794 is well known through both preparatory watercolours and engravings after the oils¹. The last, rather terminal chestnut usually trotted out is that Cleveley died after falling from cliffs at Dover! From the few examples known, Robert Cleveley was clearly an adept painter in oils as well, and a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy for more than twenty years, so it is surprising that he remains a shadowy figure. To add to the biographical uncertainty, his work in watercolour is all but indistinguishable from that of his twin brother. The frequent absence of signatures on their work led in the heyday of English watercolour collecting to the same drawing being given alternatively to one and, in a later collection, to the other. Since it seems increasingly unlikely in the future that much connoisseurship will be devoted to such genteel matters (!), and in the absence of any other, this writer has appointed himself to the task, studying originals by both twins in museums and the rest of their known work from photographs (including the fifteen examples sold by our firm since the early 1960s).

¹ The oils (90 x 135 in.) appeared at Sothebys', 18 March 1981, lots 22 and 23, and are now thought to be in a private collection in South America.

Happily there are no doubts here: the style is less metallic and slightly more subtle in touch than that of John, who tended towards even greater contrasts of light and shade. There is, too, the decisive evidence of the *ne ante quem* watermark date of 1799 and, furthermore, one of only two watercolours in the V&A by the artist which closely resemble ours (accession nos. 343.1872 and 342.1872) also bears a watermark date of 1799². As with the latter, ours have been trimmed at some stage, hence (probably) the lack of a signature. Further comparison with the V&A pair shows how the skies in these later sheets are unusually full and lively compared to the more anodyne ones in much of Cleveley's earlier work on paper, and the huge expanse of billowing cumulus cloud on the right of picture A reminds us of John Sell Cotman and his own simple but dramatic seascapes in watercolour. This confident, mature style also seems to have settled on the clever device of the band of darkened sea across the foreground which seems to set the stage for proceedings, and, by keeping the cutter and the launch just inside these darker patches of sea, Cleveley adroitly leads the viewer's eye in the direction each is heading in, and on towards the giants at anchor. His own time at sea and connections with the Navy bring to this blustery, stirring spectacle the added ring of truth.

The traditional title of these watercolours appears to be valid, and it has been suggested that the scene is 'one of the periodic meetings of the commanders of the various blockading squadrons which operated off the principal ports of France during the Napoleonic Wars'³. At anchor are at least four first-rates (the largest ships in the Navy and of which there were no more than ten serviceable in 1804) and numerous other large men o'war, including a 64- or 74- gun third rate at the extreme left of picture A. On a first rate the ensign could be as much as 20 by 40 yards in size, and the artist has had something of a field day in showing these huge swatches of colour marking out each ship in perspective, the variety and proliferation of flags indicating the presence of admirals of all three ranks: red, white and blue. Cleveley's attention to detail and his assuredness of touch are extraordinary, even in the distant parts of each scene, and readily stand up to scrutiny through a magnifying glass. The rigging, gunports and small boats lose nothing under close examination, while the precise delineations caused by the play of light on the hulls of the huge men o'war are a delight to observe. Truly the draughtsmanship of the great Willem van de Velde, the founder of British marine painting, has its colourful equal in these examples, a century after his demise in London.

JFM

¹ The oils (90 x 135 in.) appeared at Sothebys', 18 March 1981, lots 22 and 23, and are now thought to be in a private collection in South America.

² I am grateful to Peter Bower, the leading paper historian, for his first-hand analysis of the present pair in April 2017, and his subsequent written report.

³ I am grateful here to Michael Naxton for his friendly advice in April 2017 as well.



Julius Caesar Ibbetson (1759-1817)*The Falls at Tivoli*

oil on canvas
18 x 24in (45.5 x 61cm)

This painting recently surfaced in a collection in the West Country and brings to five the number of known Tivoli 'capricci' by Ibbetson¹.

Unlike most artists in the period, both his friends and those whose work he imitated, Ibbetson never had the opportunity or inclination to travel on the Continent, and so he remained in the strictest sense a painter of British landscape. As a keen adherent of the Dutch Old Masters, however, Ibbetson knew of their weakness for sunlit Mediterranean scenery – real or imagined – and earned for himself from Benjamin West the sobriquet 'the Berchem of England'. Furthermore, his summer spent touring Wales in 1792 with John 'Warwick' Smith, a watercolourist whose career was made by a five-year stay in Italy, must have further emboldened Ibbetson to try his own hand at the genre. Given his inquisitive nature and his experiments in painting, both in style and with paints and mediums, it was perhaps inevitable.

As it happens, this coherent little group of pictures, referred to by his dealer Vernon as 'Claude-Ibbetsons', date from around 1800, and if the idea was already in the artist's head for the reasons shown, then Sir George Beaumont was the spur for their creation. This collector, patron and friend to so many artists, including West, Daniell, Smirke, Hearne, Girtin and Constable, has been described as 'the leading arbiter of taste of his day' and had an abiding love for classical landscape (The gift of his own collection in 1823 would be the genesis of the founding of the National Gallery.) He was also a prolific and accomplished artist who had been in Italy with J.R.Cozens in 1782 and 1783, and his drawings in the region of Tivoli have been described as 'among the finest of his career'². Ibbetson enjoyed the support and encouragement of Beaumont from early on in his career, and in return was able to offer painterly advice to his gifted patron: their relationship was, in Beaumont's words, one of 'frank counsel mingled with unfailing courtesy'. (It is recorded that Farington entered on the inside cover of a volume of his famous diary 'Sir George Beaumont's regulating tint from Ibbetson'.) It is also noteworthy that Beaumont appreciated that same scenery which elicited the best in Ibbetson, for he toured Wales in 1793, and was at Conway again in 1800. In the summer of 1798 he stayed in the Lakes –or Westmoreland as it was then known–, and it seems likely that this was the occasion for him to show Ibbetson (who had recently settled there) his Tivoli drawings, one of which inspired Ibbetson to paint a copy in oils³. It bears repeating that Ibbetson was an opportunist who knew that his clients aspired to the fashion for 'classical' landscape epitomized in England by Richard Wilson (to whom Beaumont's own art is most indebted), and who therefore thought he might find commercial success with his own interpretation of a scenic highlight of the Grand Tour.

JFM

¹ Previously the most recent: oil on canvas, 14 x 18 in., signed and dated 1800. Sotheby's, 31st March 1999, lot 13, £18,400. Identical to the present example except for the inclusion of staffage in the lower left

² Owen, Felicity, *The Drawings of Sir George Beaumont*, Master Drawings, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Autumn 1967), p. 295

³ Oil on canvas, 18 x 24 in., dated 1802. Formerly in the collection of Eliot Hodgkin. See R.M.Clay, *Julius Caesar Ibbetson 1759-1817*, p.74, pl. 78





Jean-Victor Bertin (1767-1842)*Figures fording a River in a Classical Landscape*

oil on canvas
 13 x 18in (32.8 x 46cm)
 Inscribed and dated *Clémentine 1821*
 with fine original antique frame

PROVENANCE

France, private collection

The tradition of the classical landscape was begun in Rome in the mid-seventeenth century by the French-born artists Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and Claude le Lorrain (c.1604-1682), who sought to elevate the status of their paintings by endowing the Roman campagna with narrative references from the biblical or classical past, and imposed an idealized vision of balance and harmony on the world before them. Despite the dominance of the rococo style in the first half of the eighteenth-century, the cult of antiquity and classicism was revived from 1748 onwards with the rediscovery and subsequent excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii. By 1800 the painter Pierre Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819) was the dominant force championing the neoclassical landscape, and in 1816 succeeded in establishing a Prix de Rome honouring "historical landscape" painting.

Of his many pupils, Jean-Victor Bertin is certainly one of the most accomplished. Born in Paris in 1767, he entered the Académie Royale de Peinture as a pupil of the history painter Gabriel-François Doyen. By 1788 he had become a pupil of Valenciennes who directed him towards idealized Italianate landscape. His official debut came in 1793 when he exhibited in the 'open' Salon. After 1793 he contributed consistently to the Salon until his death. At the Restoration, Bertin was fortunate in being commissioned to join the group of artists working on the redecoration of the Grand Trianon and the Galerie de Diane at Fontainebleau, begun in 1819. He constructed his paintings predominantly according to Poussin's principles of idyllic landscape and drew on stock compositional devices from the master's repertory. The results are distinguished by a marked correctness and balance in design, severe draughtsmanship and harmonious colour. Between 1810 and 1830 he produced his most successful compositions, which use the motif of a path or river presented within an elongated horizontal schema, combining ingenious spatial construction with delicate lateral lighting.

Like his master, Valenciennes, and his contemporary Lancelot-Théodore Turpin de Crissé, Bertin perpetuated the classicizing formulae of the seventeenth-century while introducing more direct observation from life, as is seen in the charming detail of the dog paddling in the river or the unsettled horse that breaks the afternoon's calm. The increased interest in atmosphere and direct observation would continue in Bertin's pupils such as Corot, the direct precursor of Impressionism who, together with Achille Michallon, Camille-Joseph-Etienne Roqueplan and Jules Coignet, showed Bertin to have been one of the most influential teachers of the next generation of landscape painters.



The composition of the painting corresponds to several known works by Bertin. One version with minor variations was exhibited in Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox's 1979 exhibition *The Lure of Rome* (plate 6), another was included in Matthiessen Gallery's 1999 exhibition *An Eye on Nature: The Gallic Prospect, French Landscape Painting 1785-1900*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, holds an unfinished version of the same composition (2003.42.2) which is a promised gift from Wheelock Whitney.

Special mention of the exceptional condition of our picture must be made (see right). It has had the fortune to have suffered no previous restoration campaigns, and as such remains unlined and in its original frame. The removal of old discoloured varnish has revealed a perfectly preserved paint-surface, and the verdant tones of the Roman countryside are as fresh for us to enjoy today as when the artist painted them almost two hundred years ago.

We are grateful to Asher B Miller of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for his help in cataloguing this painting.

JAB



Johann Jakob Frey (1813-1865)
A Study of a Blasted Tree Trunk

oil on paper, laid down on canvas
 c.1835
 16½ x 10½in (42 x 27cm)

PROVENANCE

Studio of the Artist, Rome
 Thence by descent
 Wheelock Whitney
 Private Collection, New York.

EXHIBITED

Johann Jakob Frey (1813-1865) A Swiss Painter in Italy
 Wheelock Whitney & Company, New York.
 13 November -6 December 1985, no. 10, ill.

Frey was born in Basel but had studied in Paris and Munich before moving to Italy in the mid-1830s. Patronage from an heiress and amateur painter from Basel, Emilie Lindner, allowed Frey to take up landscape painting in Rome. In Munich, Lindner had befriended Friedrich van Overbeck, one of the leading figures amongst the 'Nazarene' painters in Rome, who subsequently welcomed Frey into the 'Eternal City's' substantial German community of artists and writers.

Together with other northern European artists based in the Mediterranean, the German painters, informed by the legacy of Joseph Anton Koch and Johann Christian Reinhart, specialized in the study of nature from life and, in particular, the atmospheric study of light. From Rome, Frey moved on to Naples and Sicily, where he became a master of *plein air* painting, favouring solitary landscapes and gathering motives for his easel paintings from many records of trees, skies and clouds. In 1842 he received an invitation from the Prussian government to join, in his capacity as a painter, the memorable Royal Prussian Expedition to Egypt and Ethiopia led by the archaeologist Karl Richard Lepsius. Henceforth Frey retained especially close links with the Prussian court where he could rely on a ready clientele for his Italian landscapes.

In his 'atmospheric' oil studies, used exclusively within his studio like our *Tree trunk* (most likely a broken-off Hungarian oak, *quercus frainetto*) Frey resorted to using a light brown paper on to which he spontaneously 'jotted' his colours: paint that was diluted down with thinners for ease of absorption and transparency. The immediacy of many of his oil sketches explains the absence of much preparatory drawing but his colours remain crisp and assured.

Although a susceptibility for trees was common to all Romantic artists, Frey was no exception and his skillful bosky scenes display a more than cursory interest in the motifs. Both fallen and living trees became an increasingly important feature in his landscapes and views of Italian cities, often relegating the architectural element to a secondary role.



Philippe Rousseau (1816-1887)*Still Life with Peaches, Figs and a Silver Goblet*

oil on canvas
signed and dated 1886
17 x 23¼in (43 x 59cm)

Philippe Rousseau has often been overshadowed by other nineteenth-century French painters called Rousseau, notably the Barbizon artist, Theodore, and the famous 'naïve' painter, Henri 'le Douanier' Rousseau. Yet, from the mid-1840s to his death in 1887, Philippe Rousseau was one of the leading exponents of animal and still-life painting.

Rousseau made a precocious debut at the Salon in 1834, at the age of eighteen, with a Normandy landscape. He continued in this vein (and also tried portraits) without success. Then, in 1844, he showed three still lifes and, the following year his *Le Rat de Ville et Le Rat des Champs* was a public success. In 1850, *Le Rat retiré du monde* (Lyon, Musée de Beaux-Arts) was bought by the state for the Palais du Luxembourg, then the museum for contemporary art. At the Exposition Universelle of 1855, he met with further success and was enthusiastically supported by Théophile Gautier. Baron Rothschild commissioned paintings and Princess Mathilde joined the growing list of patrons.

Rousseau's success is inseparable from the movement now called by art historians the 'Chardin Revival'. The French Revolution swept away the *ancien régime* so thoroughly that it was almost subversive to admire the great French artists of the eighteenth century, Jean-Simeon Chardin (1699-1779) included. However, critics such as Theodore Thoré, the champion of Vermeer and realism, successfully campaigned against the oblivion of Chardin. By 1852, the Louvre had acquired three examples and added gradually to their holding after that. In 1860, Philippe Burty organised an exhibition at the Martinet Gallery in Paris of forty Chardins. Bonvin helped obtain Chardins for the enthusiasts, such as Marcille and indeed Rousseau himself, who acquired two.

This painting, made the year before he died, shows Rousseau's mature understanding and debt to the great eighteenth-century master. Gone are the opulent and decorative displays of his earlier works, instead the palette and composition have been refined to a masterful play of contrasts; the velvety skins of the peaches against the polished silver of the goblet, the overripe figs opposite the freshly cut fruit, and the knife, that invites the spectator to participate in this still and silent world. Chardin's accomplishment was to 'marry object and atmosphere in an intimate union which makes the space of his pictures a private place, ultimately serene and inaccessible'¹ and there is little doubt, looking at this painting, that Rousseau, at the end of his long career, saw the achievements of the master he most admired fully realised in his own work.

JAB

¹ McCoubrey, John W., *The Revival of Chardin in French Still-Life Painting, 1850-1870*, 'The Art Bulletin', Vol. 46, No. 1 (March 1964), p. 46

**Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779)***Still Life with Peaches, a Silver Goblet, Grapes and Walnuts*

c.1759
oil on canvas
15 x 18½in (38.1 x 46.7cm)
J. Paul Getty Museum

Alfred Stevens (1823-1906)
La Connoisseuse

oil on panel
 signed with monogram
 8¾ x 6¾in (22 x 17cm)



Alfred Stevens (1823-1906)
An Élegante Holding a vase of Flowers

oil on panel
 signed
 13¾ x 10¾in (35 x 26cm)





Antoine Guillemet (1841-1918)

The Beach at Villerville, Normandy

oil on canvas
signed & dated 1884
15 x 21¼in (38 x 55cm)

During his lifetime, Antoine Guillemet was awarded almost every medal, honor, and distinction available to nineteenth century French artists. It is unfortunate that his fame, along with that of many of the great Barbizon and *plein-air* painters, has been overshadowed by the popularity of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists.

Guillemet was introduced to Corot by Berthe Morisot. Like many of the young artists, Guillemet affectionately called Corot 'Papa' and remained a lifelong admirer of the artist. This meeting led to Guillemet's studying with Corot's pupil Achille Oudinot, and it was through Oudinot that Guillemet met Daubigny, Manet, Alfred Stevens, Pissarro and many other important artists of that time. In Manet's *Le Balcon* the tall, rather good-looking man standing behind Berthe Morisot and Fanny Claus, with a cigarette in hand, is Antoine Guillemet. Yet Manet did more for his friend Guillemet than immortalise his appearance in this famous painting in the Musée d'Orsay. He influenced the younger artist towards a painterly, impasto style of brushwork which was to remain characteristic of Guillemet's work until the end of his long life.

Guillemet realised that he needed to make his mark at the Paris Salon and due to an early success where his painting was praised by both critics and the public, he decided to continue to show at the Salon instead of accepting the invitation of his friends to join them in exhibiting at the Impressionists shows.

This painting depicts the beach at Villerville to the west of Le Havre and appeared in Guillemet's work for over thirty years. Here an approaching storm billows towards the oyster gatherers who appear in nearly all of his coastal scenes. Although he lived in Paris, Guillemet spent every summer in Normandy where his landscape paintings were invigorated by the ever-changing weather conditions along the coast. Our firm has published two books on Guillemet and held two exhibitions of his work; next year, the bicentenary of his death will see another.

Jean Dufy (1888-1964)*A View from the Place de la Concorde to the Assemblée Nationale*

Oil on canvas
Signed
15 x 18in (38 x 45.7cm)

LITERATURE

M. Jacques Bailly, Jean Dufy, *Catalogue Raisonné of Jean Dufy's Work*, p.191, no. B254

Jean Dufy came from a family of nine children brought up in an artistic and, especially, musical environment. By the age of fourteen Dufy was painting stage sets for family plays; his talents were recognised and nurtured by his older brother Raoul and by the latter's friend Othon Friesz. He enrolled at the college of fine arts in Le Havre, where Raoul, Friesz and Georges Braque had also studied, but he abandoned his studies early on and moved to Paris to be with his brother who ultimately proved to be his mentor. He travelled extensively in Western Europe and North Africa, and served in a cavalry regiment during World War I, but by 1920 he was back in Paris, where he exhibited examples of his painting at the Salon d'Automne, of which he was already a member.

Paris in the first half of the twentieth-century was an unparalleled centre for artistic activity and experimentation. The influx of international artists such as Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall, alongside established French luminaries such as Henri Matisse and Pierre Bonnard created a cross-fertilization of styles and techniques, where bold colours and the imaginative remoulding of conventional types, still life, landscape, portraiture, established a new, albeit loosely defined school of painting known as the *École de Paris*.

It was in this imaginatively rich environment that the Dufy brothers thrived. Jean, like Raoul, often painted views of Paris and other French cities. His purpose was to capture the overall impact of a scene; his vibrant colour taking its cue from the Post-Impressionists and Fauvists, while his lyrical illustrative use of line has a decorative quality, originating from his porcelain designs for the Limoges manufacturer Théodore Haviland. From his studio in Montmartre Dufy produced his famous paintings of the orchestras and boulevards; which today are some of the most enduring images of Paris between the wars.

JAB



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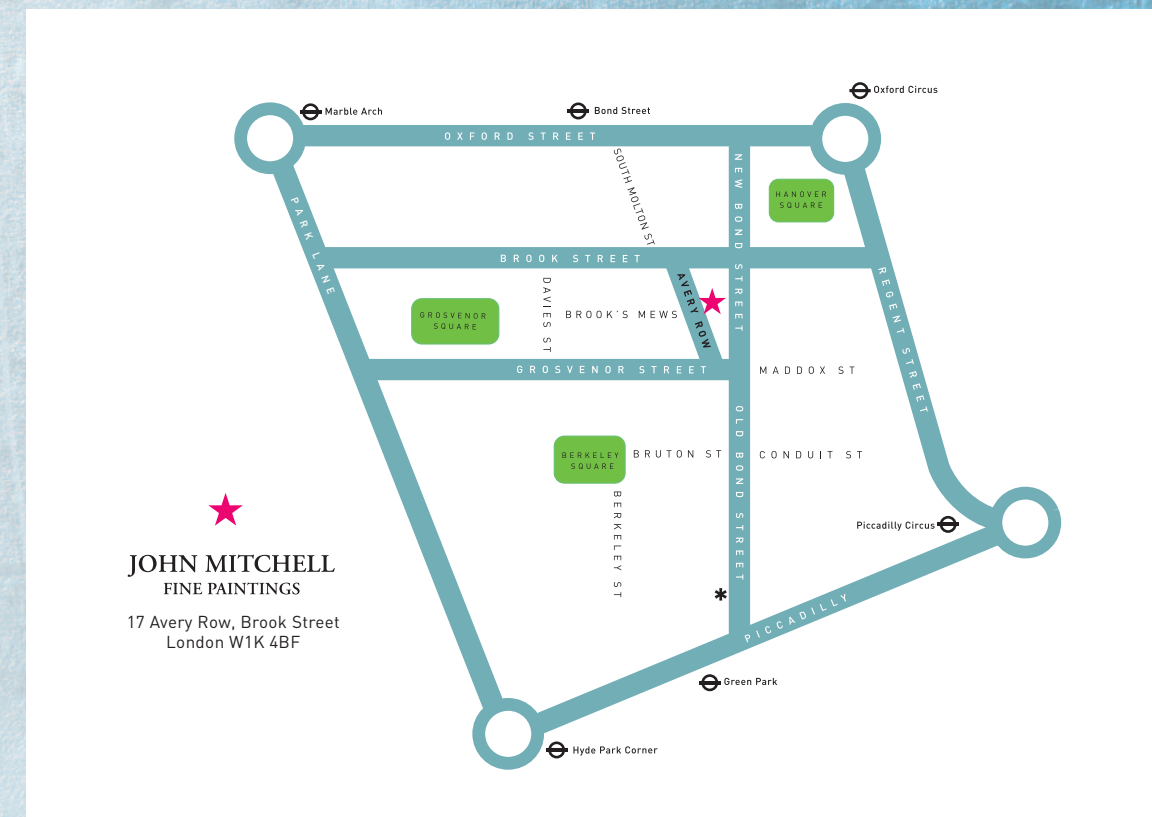
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