

A Study of Trees

Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.



Description

Thomas Gainsborough R.A. (1727-1788)
A Study of Trees

Black chalk and stump heightened with white on coloured laid paper, with watermark GR surmounted with
by a crown
15.4 by 22.3 cm., 6 by 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Provenance:

Dr R.W. Kosterlitz, New York;
Bonhams, Knightsbridge, 24 October 2012, lot 276, where bought by the present owner

Literature:

John Hayes, 'Gainsborough Drawings: a supplement to the catalogue raisonné', *Master Drawings* XXI (4),
winter 1983, p. 387, no. 954

John Hayes in his supplement to his catalogue raisonné dates the present drawing to the late 1780s. The spontaneity of the present drawing and the careful attention to details such as the shape of the trees and the forms of the leaves, suggests that this is a study directly from nature, rather than one of the staged landscape compositions for which Gainsborough was so renowned.

Although many of his on-the-spot studies are from early in his career, works such as the present drawing demonstrate the artist's continuing interest in studying from nature. Gainsborough was not interested in topographical subject matter, rather he was influenced by the works of earlier European Masters including Ruisdael, Claude and Poussin and their preferences for idealised landscapes. Furthermore, it is rare to find any of his nature studies directly translated into his finished works. He regarded such studies as exercises for his hand, which freed up his mind and gave him a thorough understanding of the shape and structure of different types of trees, their branches and leaves and the interplay of light and shadow. This enabled him to refine his artistic vision and informed his finished drawings and paintings.