

Horses Feeding in a Farmyard

David Cox



Description

David Cox (1783-1859)
Horses Feeding in a Farmyard

Watercolour over traces of pencil heightened with touches of bodycolour and stopping out on oatmeal paper 51.6 by 74.3 cm., 20 1/4 by 29 1/4 in.

This recently rediscovered watercolour dates from the mid-1840s. It is rare for Cox to depict animals as the central feature in his works, usually they appear as staffage in a wider landscape. The bold handling of present watercolour is characteristic of the artist's extraordinarily loose, fluid style which he began to develop in the 1830s. His technique is further emphasised by the rough oatmeal paper that he has used. As Peter Bower noted 'Cox liked papers that allowed him to work fast with a heavily loaded brush' (P. Bower, 'A Remarkable Understanding', in *Sun, Wind, and Rain: The Art of David Cox*, 2008-9, p. 96).

In 1836, Cox found a strong wrapping paper, known by Cox as 'Scotch' paper. The coarse grain and the high absorbency rate of the paper, made it unsuitable for the more usual fine brushwork and even washes employed by many of his contemporaries and appealed to Cox's desire to experiment with and push watercolour to its full potential. He was so taken with the effects that the paper could produce, that he bought a ream of it, however, Cox didn't always find the challenge easy and he wrote to his son, 'My drawing upon Scotch paper is so rough I fear I shall bring down all against me, but the paper had plagued me so that I am very nervous' (letter to his son, quoted in N. Solly, *Memoir of the Life of David Cox*, 1873, p. 219).

For a full discussion of Cox's use of paper see P. Bower, 'A Remarkable Understanding', in *Sun, Wind, and Rain: The Art of David Cox*, exh. cat., Yale Centre for British Art and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 2008-9, pp.97-111.