A pastoral landscape

Richard Wilson

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REF: 2550

Description

Richard Wilson (1713/14-1782)
A pastoral landscape

Pencil, black chalk and stump on paper mounted on tan card
With collectors' marks: Paul Sandby, Lugt 2112 (lower left); Nathaniel Hone, Lugt 2793 (lower centre)
12.2 by 12.6 cm., 4 ¾ by 5 in.

Provenance:
Nathaniel Hone (1718-1784);
Paul Sandby (c.1730-1809);
Private Collection New York;
Private Collection, Washington D.C.

Literature:
Dr Paul Spencer-Longhurst, with Kate Lowry and David Solkin, Richard Wilson Online: A Digital Catalogue Raisonné, (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2014)., D 411

Born in Penegoes, Powys, North Wales, Wilson became the leading British landscapist of his generation, as well as being regarded as one of the great artistic pioneers of the 18th century. He became instrumental in elevating landscape painting from being regarded as either topographical, or merely descriptive settings, into a genre in its own right, often endowed with classical or historical associations.

Wilson initially established himself as a portrait painter, however, during the time he spent in Italy between 1750 and 1757, Wilson became increasingly interested in landscape painting and inspired by European contemporaries, such as Francesco Zuccarelli (1702-1788), whom he met in Venice in 1751 and Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), who he met shortly afterwards in Rome and who strongly recommended landscape as a genre in preference to portraiture, Wilson altered track and it is his landscape painting for which he is celebrated.

On Wilson's return to London, he established a studio in the affluent Piazza of Covent Garden. He was a founding member of both the Society of Artists in 1760 and of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768, and he exhibited regularly at both institutions. However, in later years, for reasons which are still uncertain, Wilson's reputation underwent a rapid decline (from which it has only recently recovered). He turned increasingly to drink in his last years, eventually unable to even hold the post of Librarian at the Royal Academy, which is fellow Academicians had appointed him in an effort to help him. In 1781 he retired o the home of his cousin, Catherine Jones at Colomendy Hall, Clwyd, where he died the following year.

This drawing was one of a number that was in the collections of two of Wilson's artist contemporaries, Nathaniel Hone and Paul Sandby. A group of drawings by Wilson, owned by William Lock 'of Norbury' included twelve 'Small circular Landscapes, Views in the Environs of Rome, taken in the years 1754 and 1756', were sold at Sotheby's, 3 May 1821, lot 386, although this drawing is not known to have belonged to Locke. It is dated to 1754-56.

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