Porte St Denis, Paris

David Cox

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REF: 3052

Description

David Cox (1783-1859)
Porte St Denis, Paris

Watercolour over pencil on wove paper watermarked T. EDMONDS 1825
36.6 by 26 cm., 14 ½ by 10 ¼ in.

Provenance:
John Herbert Rogers, 1st Baron Clwyd, Abergele, Denbighshire;
By descent in the family;
With the Manning Gallery, London, 1960;
With Andrew Wyld, W/S Fine Art, London, 2007;
With Lowell Libson, London, 2012;
Private Collection

Literature:
Horace Shipp, Current Shows and Comment - Sure Eye, Sure Hand, Apollo, March 1960, p.61, ill.;
Spink Leger Pictures, Air and Distance, Storm and Sunshine - Paintings, Watercolours and Drawings by David Cox, exhibition catalogue, 1999, under no.30;
Scott Wilcox, Sun, Wind and Rain: The Art of David Cox, exhibition catalogue, 2008-9, p.176, no.47;
Lowell Libson Ltd, Exhibition Catalogue, 2012, pp.114-5

Exhibited:
London, Manning Gallery, Spring Exhibition: English and Continental Drawings, March 1960;
New Haven, Yale Center for British Art and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Sun, Wind, and Rain: The Art of David Cox, 2008-9, no.47

Cox visited the Continent on three occasions - to Belgium and Holland in 1826 and to France in 1829 and 1832. This drawing is likely to date from his second trip, and first to Paris, in the summer of 1829 in the company of his son and fellow artist David Cox Junior. In Paris they met their friend the Birmingham engraver John Pye who offered to be their guide. On their second day in the city, Cox badly sprained his ankle while descending stairs in the Palais Royal which incapacitated him throughout his six week stay. Undaunted, he hired a cab which he asked to stop when he found an interesting subject or view and sketched from inside the vehicle or occasionally from a chair. This may explain the rapid, unfinished nature of most of his Paris drawings which are some of his most impressive and sought after works. Stephen Duffy describes his French drawings from 1829 as `works of exceptional brilliance and vigour' (Stephen Duffy, The Discovery of Paris - Watercolours by early Nineteenth Century British Artists, 2013, p.77).

There are two recorded versions of this view by Cox, the other is recorded in a private collection (see Gerald Bauer, David Cox - Précurseur des Impressionistes?, 2000, p.147, ill.). The present work is looser in style and appears to be the on-the-spot sketch - the pencil may have been drawn on the spot with the watercolour added later. The other version, although incomplete, is more highly finished and more likely to be a studio work.

The Porte St. Denis was the largest triumphal arch in Paris at the time of Cox's visit (the Arc de Triomphe was not completed until 1836) and was erected by Louis XIV in the early 1670s to commemorate earlier military victories. Cox may have been attracted to the subject as he knew it from Thomas Giritn's Selection of Twenty of the Most Picturesque View in Paris, and its Environs, published in 1803.

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