

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**J. J. Grandville (1803 - 1847)**

## **A Frog in an Overcoat, Holding a Top Hat and Cane**

Pen and brown ink and watercolour.

224 x 173 mm. (8 3/4 x 6 3/4 in.)

This drawing is related to Grandville's illustrations for the *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux*. This remarkable work, based entirely around Grandville's animal drawings, was the idea of the young publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, who commissioned stories from Honoré de Balzac, Alfred de Musset and other writers to accompany the illustrations. Hetzel himself wrote the introduction and several of the stories under the pseudonym of P.-J. Stahl. The *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* was issued in a hundred instalments between November 1840 and December 1842, and the complete set was published in two volumes in 1842. It was republished in 1866 as *Les Animaux peints par eux-mêmes et dessinés par un autre*.

The present sheet was used to illustrate a story by Louis Francois L'Héritier de l'Ain, entitled 'Pérégrination mémoriale du doyen des crapauds'. Taking the form of a reminiscence by an old toad, the story tells tales of his youthful adventures. Grandville's drawing of an elegantly-dressed frog, bearing the caption 'Les doyen des Crapauds', served as the frontispiece to the story.

### **Provenance:**

Anonymous sale, Milan, Sotheby's, 8 May 2001, part of lot 515

P. & D. Colnaghi, London, in 2001

Private collection, London.

### **Artist description:**

Taking the surname of his grandfather, an actor from Lorraine named Grandville, Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard arrived in Paris in 1823. He began his artistic career as a miniaturist, but soon developed an interest in social and political caricature, providing illustrations for such satirical newspapers, or journeaux amusants, as *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*. He also produced lithographs for illustrated magazines like *L'Illustration* and *Le Magasin pittoresque*. His reputation was firmly established, however, by the publication in 1829 of *Les métamorphoses du jour*, an album of 73 lithographs of scenes of Parisian life, but with animals in the guise of humans. Grandville developed a particular speciality of this sort of comic illustration, and his interest in animals as human symbols reached a peak with the appearance of his *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* in 1842. The following year Grandville published his best-known work, *Un autre monde*, a fantastical and occasionally disturbing series of images that served as a compendium of all of the artist's interests. Grandville was widely admired in his lifetime, Charles Baudelaire writing of him that 'With superhuman courage this man devoted his life to refashioning creation. He took it in his hands, wrung it, rearranged it, explained it and annotated it; and Nature was transformed into a fantasmagoria. He turned the world upside down.' The largest collection of drawings by Grandville is today to be found in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nancy.