

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Jean-Louis PRÉVOST (Nointel c.1760 - c.1810)

Two Medlars and Wild Plants by a Stream

Watercolour and gouache, with traces of a framing line in brown ink, on faded blue paper.

Signed J. L. Prevost at the lower right.

349 x 226 mm. (13 3/4 x 8 7/8 in.)

This fine watercolour typifies Jean-Louis Prévost's close study of nature. As a modern scholar has noted, 'With botanical fidelity and conscientiousness Prévost portrays the smallest detail: almost imperceptible drops of dew on leaf and petal, a small beetle hanging on a tendril. He possesses everything – strength and gentleness, passion and tenderness, a sense for grandeur and love for unconsidered trifle. He is neither pretentious, mannered nor sentimental. He approaches his subject with absolute objectivity and honesty. His technique consists in grace of brushwork and elegance of line drawing.'

Artist description:

Very little is known of the life of Jean-Louis Prévost, who was born into an extended family of artists. He studied in Paris with the flower painter Jean-Jacques Bachelier and exhibited his work for the first time at the Académie Royale at the age of fourteen. Devoting himself mainly to flowers and fruit subjects, Prévost was commissioned by a M. Roussel to paint the flowers in the gardens of his home, resulting in the twelve-volume of gouache studies known as the Hortus cellensis, which was acquired by the Natural History Library in Paris in 1782. He was a member of the Académie de Saint-Luc and became known in particular for his botanical watercolours, which were regularly shown at the Paris Salons. In 1791 Prévost began work on another volume of forty-eight botanical watercolours, the Collection de fleurs et

fruits, eventually published in several portfolios in 1805. Although highly accurate, these works were not overtly scientific in nature, and were intended for the use of designers of fabric and porcelain. Many of Prévost's watercolours were reproduced with great sensitivity as coloured prints by the stipple engraver Louis-Charles Ruotte.