Stephen Ongpin Fine Art

James Holland (1799 - 1870)

A Sheet of Studies of Gondolas and Figures

Pencil and watercolour on paper; a page from a sketchbook.
Signed with initials, inscribed and dated JH Melons .26.Sept.57 at the lower right.
Inscribed James Holland on the verso.
131 x 198 mm. (5 1/8 x 7 3/4 in.)

James Holland made his first visit to Venice in 1835, and enjoyed a lifelong fascination with the architecture of the city. He first exhibited a watercolour view of Venice at the Old Water-Colour Society in 1836 (where it was purchased by John James Ruskin, the father of John Ruskin), and he continued to show Venetian subjects throughout his later career.

A photograph of another page from the same 1857 Venice sketchbook, depicting fishing boats moored on a quayside and dated October 3rd, 1857, is in the Witt Library, London.

Provenance:

Probably the posthumous Holland studio sale, London, Christie's, 26 May 1870
John Appleby, Jersey
Thence by descent until 2010.

Artist description:

Born in Staffordshire, James Holland was apprenticed as a painter in a factory in Stoke-on-Trent at the age of twelve, painting flowers on pottery. In 1819 he settled in London, where he continued to work as a pottery painter and also produced watercolours of natural history subjects, but at the same time began to focus on landscapes. By 1824 he had a floral still life painting exhibited at the Royal Academy. At the beginning of the 1830s he began to travel extensively around Europe, and soon established a reputation for paintings and watercolours of Continental views, and in particular for depictions of Venice. Aaprt from Italy, Holland also travelled to France, Portugal, Switzerland, Austria and the Netherlands. Holland joined the Old Water-Colour Society in 1835, and exhibited nearly two hundred works there over the course of his career. While his watercolours of the 1830s show the particular influence of Richard Parkes Bonington, by the following decade his style had become looser and he began to produce works extensively heightened with bodycolour. Holland exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy, showing both paintings and watercolours, as well as the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, the British Institution and the Society of British Artists. The contents of the artist's studio were dispersed at auction a few months after his death in 1870.