

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART

□
William Callow (1812 - 1908)

The Temple of Vesta and the Falls at Tivoli

Watercolour, over a pencil underdrawing, heightened with touches of bodycolour, on paper laid down on board.

Signed and dated William Callow / 1859 at the lower left.
748 x 577 mm. (29 3/8 x 22 3/4 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART, CLEVELAND, OH.

Exhibited at the Old Water-Colour Society in London in 1859, this stunning, large watercolour is likely to have been based on sketches made by Callow when he first visited Tivoli on his inaugural trip to Italy in 1840. In that year he produced a number of watercolours of the falls, one of which was exhibited in London the following year. (Another Tivoli watercolour drawn during this 1840 trip, much smaller than the present sheet, is today in the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio.) Callow exhibited another large watercolour of Tivoli – a view of The Villa d'Este and the Cascatelle at Tivoli, of horizontal format - at the Old Water-Colour Society in 1860, the year after the present sheet was shown, while another view of Tivoli with the Cascade and Temple of the Sybil was exhibited there in the summer of 1875.

Provenance:

Peter and Olive Belton, Leicester, until 2009.

Exhibitions

London, Society of Painters in Water-Colours, 1859, no.190; Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, British Drawings from the Cleveland Museum of Art, 2013, no.35.

Literature:

H. M. Cundall, ed., William Callow, R.W.S., F.R.G.S.: An Autobiography, London, 1908, p.154 ('List of Paintings Exhibited at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours'); Jan Reynolds, William Callow R.W.S., London, 1980, p.213 ('Complete List of Exhibits by William Callow with the Society of Painters in Water-colours, 1838-1908'); Heather Lemonedes, British Drawings: The Cleveland Museum of Art, exhibition catalogue, Cleveland, 2013, pp.104-107, no.35.

Artist description:

Over the course of a very long career, William Callow established a reputation as among the most talented, and prolific, watercolour artists in England. He completed his training in Paris, where he remained working as an independent artist, with some success, until 1841. He took over the Parisian studio of Thomas Shutter Boys, exhibited his watercolours at the Salons every year, and gave lessons in drawing to King Louis-Philippe and other members of the French royal family. In 1838, while still living and working in Paris, Callow was elected an Associate of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours; a most unusual honour for an artist not based in England, and requiring a special exemption from the rules of the Society. Between 1836 and 1840 Callow made three extensive tours through France, Switzerland and Italy.

In March 1841 he left Paris and settled in London, where he was as yet relatively unknown. He began again to work as a drawing master, for which he was soon in great demand, and to show his work at the annual exhibitions of the Old Water-Colour Society, to which he contributed every year until his death in 1908. Among Callow's patrons was the Duke of Devonshire, who commissioned two views of Chatsworth as gifts for Queen Victoria. Sketching tours of Germany in 1844 and Holland in 1845 were followed by a honeymoon with his new wife Harriet through Germany, Switzerland and Northern Italy in 1846.

Elected a full member of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours in 1848, Callow had by this time established a successful and lucrative career. In 1855 the Callows settled in a cottage in the village of Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire, although the artist would travel to London daily in the summer. He continued to make frequent tours throughout Britain and Europe, the last foreign trip being a visit to Italy in 1892, at the age of eighty. In 1907 a retrospective exhibition on his watercolours was held at the Leicester Galleries in London; this was, in fact, the artist's first and only solo exhibition in his lifetime.

One review of the exhibition noted that 'Mr. Callow has faithfully upheld the best tradition of the old British school of water-colour paintings and, as one of its last exponents, his work is always interesting to the student.'

Callow died a few months after the exhibition, at the age of ninety-five. In the preface to an interview with the artist published shortly before his death, the Burlington Magazine noted that 'In the annual shows of the 'Old' Water Colour Society the drawings of Mr. William Callow have been a remarkable feature for very many years. In the face of body colour and every device that the ingenuity of modern water colour artists has discovered to obtain greater power and force, these modest wash drawings have more than held their own, and even the brilliant mastery of men as great as Mr. Sargent cannot extinguish their more retiring dignity.'