Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



William White WARREN (London (?) 1832 - Bristol 1911)

Pale Evening Clouds

Oil on thin card.

84 x 184 mm. (3 1/4 x 7 1/4 in.)

The present sheet is a fine and typical example of William White Warren's oil sketches of sky and cloud studies, which make up a significant part of his output. Many such studies are executed with a spirited handling of the brush that comes quite close to the work of John Constable. Indeed, Warren saw himself as a disciple and follower of Constable, so it is somewhat ironic that, a few years after his death, several of his unsigned oil sketches appeared at auction with an attribution to the older artist, leading to a well known court case.

Provenance:

Martyn Gregory, London, in 1995
Mr. and Mrs. Giorgio Marsan, London.

Exhibitions

London, Martyn Gregory, William White Warren: An exhibition of oil sketches, 1995, no.45.

Artist description:

Little is known of the life and career of William White Warren, whose work was first exhibited at the British Institution between 1865 and 1867. His entire output seems to have been made up of oil sketches - mostly on a small scale - that can for the most part be dated to the 1860's and 1870's. In 1869 he held an exhibition of 'Original Sketches recently taken in Rome, Naples, Venice, Sardinia, Corsica, together with previous tours by W. W. Warren' at the German Gallery in New Bond Street; these were mostly views of Italy and France but also included some English and Irish subjects. In the summer of 1870 Warren travelled to Spain and North Africa, and showed 130 sketches made on this trip in another exhibition in London the following year. A further exhibition was held in 1880, the result of a trip to Venice and Cyprus between 1877 and 1878. Warren seems to have had a successful career, and may have been independently wealthy. Certainly he was able to assemble an extensive collection of antiquities, glass, silver, porcelain, bronzes, miniatures, engravings and paintings that was sold at auction over five days at Christie's in London in 1886. The sale included some fifty of his own paintings of Mediterranean views, which sold for up to fifty guineas apiece, as well as some works executed by Warren in collaboration with other artists, including Alfred Vickers and James Holland. Despite the relative success of the sale, however, later in his life Warren seems to have fallen on hard times; he was in ill health and was working as a shopkeeper in Bristol at the time of his death in 1911.

Warren's oil sketches seem to have been first discovered by the collector, scholar and connoisseur Paul Wallraf. In 1954 another art historian and collector, John Gere, purchased a view of the Crystal Palace by Warren, now on long-term loan to the National Gallery in London. Gere eventually came to own some seven works by the artist, which formed the nucleus of his impressive collection of landscape oil sketches by European artists assembled over a period of some forty years. Other oil sketches by Warren are today in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath, and elsewhere.