

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Joseph Goupy (Nevers 1686 - London 1770)

A Mountainous Landscape with Figures, after Salvator Rosa

Gouache.

Traces of framing lines in gold and black at the edges.

The verso blackened.

Inscribed with initials G (or C?)LN at the lower right.

265 x 411 mm. (10 3/8 x 16 in.)

The present sheet records the composition of a now-lost painting by Salvator Rosa, which is only known today from an etching in reverse by Goupy himself. The print is entitled 'Augures' (The Augurs) and is inscribed 'Salvator Rosa pinxit' and 'Jos. Goupy fecit Londini'. The fact that the verso of this gouache is blackened would suggest that the present sheet was, in all likelihood, the artist's preparatory drawing for the etching, which he then worked up with gouache to create an independent, finished work of art.

Goupy is known to have made etchings after some ten paintings by Rosa, as noted by the 18th century writer George Vertue, who recorded prints 'Etch'd by Joseph Goupy from several rare original pictures of Salvator Rosa in the Collections of the Curious. This work, gave great satisfaction being done in the stile of Salvator, well imitating his freedom & Spirit.' As the contemporary English artist and writer William Gilpin further noted, 'GOUPY very happily caught the manner of SALVATOR; and in some things excelled him. There is a richness in his execution, and a spirit in his trees, which SALVATOR wants...Landscape is his fort.' A modern scholar has echoed this view, writing that 'If one was to state a preference for an engraver [in reproducing the compositions of Salvator Rosa] then the work of Joseph Goupy stands out for its sensitivity, particularly as he adopts Rosa's etching style in which to reproduce the paintings – doing Rosa in reverse, as it were.' Goupy's particular fondness for Rosa's work may well have been the result of his association with Marco Ricci.

A somewhat smaller gouache variant of the composition of the present sheet, with numerous differences and less overtly horizontal in format, is in the collection of the British Museum. Other comparable gouache drawings by Goupy after Salvator Rosa include a Tobias and the Angel, derived from a painting by Rosa in the National Gallery in London, which appeared at auction in 1998, while a gouache variant of the same Tobias composition, together with a pendant of The Dream of Jacob, also after a Rosa painting now at Chatsworth, is in a private collection in Madrid. Another gouache drawing by Goupy after Rosa's The Dream of Jacob is in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Provenance:

Possibly the posthumous Goupy sale, London, Langford and Son, 3 April 1770

Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 26 November 1968, lot 156 (as Marco Ricci, Saint John the Baptist Preaching), bt. Rogers for 420 gns.

Artist description:

Born in France, Joseph Goupy worked as a painter, draughtsman and printmaker in England, where he had settled by 1711, becoming one of the first members of Sir Godfrey Kneller's Academy of Painting and Drawing in London. Goupy made a particular specialty of small-scale copies in gouache of Old Master paintings; these were greatly admired and avidly sought by collectors and connoisseurs. (Several of his landscape gouaches – both original compositions and copies after the work of other artists – were also published as prints.) Goupy's gouache technique may have been influenced by the work of Marco Ricci, whom he met in England and with whose support he was engaged on the painting of sets for the Royal Academy of Music in the 1720's. Goupy became a close friend of the composer George Frideric Handel, and decorated sets for several of his operas. He was employed by King George I on the restoration of four of Andrea Mantegna's series of paintings of the Triumphs of Caesar, for which he was paid £200, and in 1736 was appointed 'Cabinet Painter' and curator to Frederick, Prince of Wales. Among the contents of Leicester House, the Prince's London residence, were noted several gouaches after Old Master paintings by Goupy, who also decorated the Chinese Pavilion at Kew Gardens. The artist is only rarely documented after the Prince of Wales's death in 1751, however, and died in poverty some twenty years later.