

Carl HAAG (Erlangen 1820 - Oberwesel 1915)

Mohammed, A Bedouin Boy of the Sinai

Watercolour, over an underdrawing in pencil.
Signed and dated Carl Haag 1858. at the lower right.
Inscribed A Bedawee Boy at the lower left.
Further inscribed and dated Mohammed di Sinai / Dez: the 2nd 1858 and numbered 16 on the verso.
Inscribed Mohamad / A Bedawee Boy of the Tarvarah Tribe, Sinai / painted by Carl Haag / Cairo 1858 on a label formerly attached to the old backing board.
347 x 246 mm. (13 5/8 x 9 3/4 in.)

On the occasion of a retrospective exhibition of Haag's watercolours in 1885, in which this drawing was included, one writer noted that the artist 'for some years wandered through Italy, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, finding a resting-place for months with those children of the desert, the Arabs, whose history, and their strange, wild life, powerfully affected a poetic chord in the artist's nature; and this greatly influenced his future art...A traveller in many lands, and with mind receptive of beauty in whatever form it might be found, still it was not until the artist had sheltered beneath the Pyramids...and had made his home in tents with wandering Bedouin, that he found his art instinct satisfied and at rest. Here was a country venerable with the dust of countless ages, a people but little changed in manners, customs, or even costume, since they were sent out as wanderers by the Creator. In a land so picturesque, and a people whose history was full of poetry, subjects for the artist's pencil for the future were assured, and from those subjects he has, indeed, rarely wandered.'

Drawn on the 2nd of December 1858, this sensitive watercolour portrait is typical of Haag's sympathetic treatment of the people he encountered on his travels in Egypt. Among comparable watercolours is a Portrait of Ali Ben Nasir Mansur, Son of the Bedaween Sheikh of Sinai, dated 1858, and An Arab Shepherd Boy in the Desert near Cairo, dated the following year, as well as Moosa, a Bedawee, of the Howaren Tribe, drawn in 1873; all three works were until 1982 in the possession of the

artist's descendants. Also stylistically comparable is a watercolour portrait of 'Fatime of Aboukir', an Egyptian Fellaheen Girl, dated 1858, which appeared at auction in 2000.

In 1885 the Goupil Galleries in London held a loan exhibition of Haag's watercolours, with works lent by Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, among others. The present sheet was included in that exhibition, lent by Sir Prescott Gardner Hewett (1812-1891), a surgeon at St. George's Hospital and an amateur watercolourist, who in the 1840's had saved Haag's right hand after it was severely injured by the explosion of a powder flask, burning the tendons. Much of Hewett's collection of watercolours was left to the nation, and is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Provenance:

The Fine Art Society, London, in 1882
Sir Prescott Gardner Hewett, Bart., London
Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 13 October 2000, lot 519
Kate de Rothschild, London, in 2001
Private collection.

Exhibitions

London, Verein für Kunst und Wissenschaft (German Athenaeum), A selection of Carl Haag's Watercolour Paintings, Studies, and Sketches, illustrative of his artistic career from an early period to the present time, 1876, no.26 ('A Bedawee Boy. Study of a Head. 1858. Lent by the Artist.'); London, The Fine Art Society, Exhibition of Pictures and Drawings of Venice and of A Series of Drawings of Egyptian Life by Carl Haag, 1882, no.20 ('Mohamed, A Bedawee Boy of the Hawareen Tribe, Sinai.'); London, The Goupil Galleries, The Works of Mr. Carl Haag, R.W.S., 1885, no.207 ('Mohamad. A Bedawee Boy of the Howara Tribe, Sinai.', lent by Sir Prescott Hewett); London, Kate de Rothschild at Didier Aaron London Ltd., Master Drawings, 2001, no.44.

Artist description:

Born in Bavaria, Carl Haag was apprenticed to an uncle, a porcelain painter in Nuremberg, and also studied at a local drawing school. His earliest works were drawings of buildings in Nuremberg, as well as portraits and portrait miniatures, from which he earned a modest living. In 1847 he visited England to learn more about the English watercolour technique, studying at the Royal Academy Schools. It was during this period that a severe burn injury to his right hand led to the adoption of a looser, more spontaneous watercolour technique. (Prescott Hewett, the surgeon who operated on Haag's hand, became the artist's first important patron, and introduced the artist to the future Lord Penrhyn, who was to commission a number of Italian views from him.) A visit to Italy resulted in a number of genre and landscape subjects that were exhibited in London.

In 1852, while sketching in the Tyrol, Haag met Charles, Prince of Leiningen, who was the half-brother of Queen Victoria, and the following year was invited to Balmoral by the Queen herself. Victoria commissioned a number of works from Haag, notably two landscapes of Morning in the Highlands and Evening at Balmoral, and he also produced portraits of members of the Royal Household; these works are all still in the Royal Collection and are housed in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. The patronage of the royal family established Haag's reputation, and he was elected a full member of the Old Water-Colour Society in 1855. Between 1854 and 1857 Haag travelled extensively throughout Europe, visiting Italy, Germany, Montenegro and Dalmatia.

At the end of 1857, Haag decided to travel to Egypt and the Near East, where he was to remain for two years. He arrived in Cairo in January 1858, and in October made a trip to Greece and Turkey, before returning to Egypt in November, where he was joined by the artist Frederick Goodall, with whom he shared a studio. He remained in Cairo in the early months of 1859, making trips to Giza and Suez and producing drawings and sketches of the landscapes and the Bedouin people he encountered in the

desert. In April Haag visited Jerusalem, where he stayed for about three months. There, at the special request of Queen Victoria, the Sultan granted the artist permission to paint the interior of the mosque of the Dome of the Rock; the first artist to be given access to this holy site. Haag then moved on to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Damascus and Palmyra, where he arrived in October 1859 and remained for a month before returning to Cairo for the winter.

In the spring of 1860 he returned to England, but returned to Egypt between 1873 and 1874. Haag kept two studios, one in England and the other in Germany, which gives some idea of his successful career. His studio in Hampstead was decorated in a Middle Eastern style, with objects gathered on his travels, while his home and studio in the Rhine town of Oberwesel was in a tower (known as the Rote Thürm, or Red Tower) overlooking the river. It was here that, at the age of eighty-three, Haag retired.