Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Claude-Louis CHATELET (Paris 1750 - Paris 1795)

Landscape with an Alpine Waterfall

Pen and black ink and grey wash, heightened with white, on blue paper.
Inscribed Champ du Moulin at the lower left.
212 x 263 mm. (8 3/8 x 10 3/8 in.)

This striking landscape may be dated to the period of Chatelet's travels around Switzerland in 1780-1781, in preparation for La Borde and Zurlauben's Tableaux topographiques, pittoresques, physiques, historiques, moraux, politiques, littéraires de la Suisse. A stylistically comparable drawing of the waterfalls at Schaffhausen, in Switzerland near the German border, and drawn on the same deep blue paper, was formerly in the collection of John Gaines in Lexington, Kentucky, and was sold at auction in 2001. The present sheet may also be compared with a drawing of The Cascade at Tivoli in the Jeffrey Horvitz collection in Massachusetts, which is drawn in the same distinctive technique, as are two further studies of mountain views by the artist, on identical blue paper, in the same collection.

Provenance:

Private collection
Anonymous sale, New York, Christie's, 22 January 2004, lot 211
Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd., London, in 2005
Private collection.

Literature:

New York, Wildenstein, The Arts of France from François Ier to Napoléon Ier: A Centennial Celebration of Wildenstein's Presence in New York, exhibition catalogue, 2005-2006, p.294, under no.124, note 8; New York and London, Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd., Master Drawings and Oil Sketches, 2005, no.34.

Artist description:

Very little is known of the birth and artistic training of Claude-Louis Chatelet. He is not recorded as a student at the Académie Royale, and the known facts of his career are few. Active primarily as a topographical draughtsman and book illustrator, he seems to have completed only a handful of

paintings, among them views of Versailles and one or two seascapes. It is rather for his landscape drawings in watercolour or gouache that Chatelet is best known. Like his contemporaries Louis-Gabriel Moreau and Louis Belanger, Chatelet often depicted the parks and gardens around Paris, such as Bellevue, the Petit Trianon at Versailles and the Folie Saint-James at Neuilly. In 1776 and again between 1780 and 1781 he traveled throughout Switzerland, producing several drawings for Jean-Benjamin de La Borde and Baron Beat Fidel de Zurlauben's massive publishing project, the Tableaux topographiques, pittoresques, physiques, historiques, moraux, politiques, littéraires de la Suisse.

Chatelet's most important commission, however, came soon after his return from Switzerland, when he was asked to supply landscape illustrations for the Abbé de Saint-Non's Voyage pittoresque, ou description historique des royaumes de Naples, et de Sicile, published in five volumes between 1781 and 1786. Chatelet undertook a trip to southern Italy, in the company of Louis-Jean Desprez and Dominique-Vivant Denon, to prepare drawings for the project. He was, along with Desprez, responsible for the largest number of the illustrations later engraved for the book, to which Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Hubert Robert, Jean-Pierre Houel and Saint-Non himself also contributed. Actively involved in radical politics, Chatelet was a fervent Revolutionary and a member of the Jacobin Tribunal. After the fall of Robespierre in 1794, he was imprisoned and sent to the guillotine on the 7th of May the following year.