Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Henry Scott TUKE (York 1858 - Falmouth 1929)

Study of Sea, Sky and Clouds

Watercolour.
Signed H.S.T. at the lower right.
139 x 214 mm. (5 1/2 x 8 3/8 in.)

Henry Scott Tuke worked in watercolour throughout his career, and his skill in the medium was recognized by many of his peers. In 1904 he was elected an Associate of the Royal Watercolour Society (alongside John Singer Sargent, whose work as a watercolourist he much admired) and became a full member seven years later; in all Tuke exhibited a total of 220 watercolours at the Society between 1904 and 1927. As a recent scholar has noted, 'It was in the medium of watercolour that Tuke showed his real spontaneity and natural impressionism...Like Sargent, Tuke was mainly interested in using watercolour to capture light, in particular light on water. His trip to the Mediterranean in 1892 and to Venice in 1899 produced watercolours that capture the rich colours and brilliant light he saw there. Also they were predominantly executed in a bold, impressionist style.'

Most of Tuke's watercolours – for the most part drawn in small sketchbooks - are individual studies of boats and sailing ships, or port scenes and seascapes with shipping. Pure seascapes like the present sheet are relatively rare in his oeuvre, however. Among a handful of similarly atmospheric watercolours by the artist is a seascape study, of identical dimensions to the present sheet and possibly from the same sketchbook, which was sold at auction in London in 2014, as well as a slightly larger view of the coast of North Berwick in Scotland, datable to c.1891, in the collection of the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society in Falmouth. Also stylistically comparable is a watercolour view of a sunrise with shipping, signed and dated 1916, that appeared at auction in 2000.

Artist description:

Born into a Quaker family in Yorkshire in 1858, Henry Scott Tuke settled with his family in Falmouth in Cornwall two years later, in 1860. He enrolled in the Slade School of Art in London in 1875, at the age of seventeen, and completed his studies in Europe, exhibiting for the first time at the Royal Academy in 1879. After spending the winter of 1880-1881 in Florence, Tuke studied with Jean Paul Laurens in Paris between 1881 and 1883, when he also met and came under the influence of Jules Bastien-Lepage. On his return to England he joined the little artists' colony, led by Stanhope Forbes, in the Cornish fishing village of Newlyn. In 1885 Tuke settled for good in Falmouth, where for over forty years he lived in a small cottage on the cliffs south of the town. There he painted on the secluded beaches below the cliffs, where his favoured subjects were of nude youths bathing and swimming, his models depicted with a relaxed and unselfconscious manner. Tuke was also an avid sailor, and many of his

paintings depict fishermen and sailors at work, as well as ships and port scenes. In 1886 he purchased an old French brigantine, the Julie of Nantes, which he converted into a floating studio. In the same year he became a founder member of the New English Art Club.

In 1889 Tuke's painting All Hands to the Pumps was purchased for the Nation by the Tate Gallery's Chantrey Fund; this was followed in 1895 by a second purchase by the Fund for the Tate, of the painting August Blue. Elected an Associate Member of the Royal Academy in 1900, Tuke became an Academician in 1914. For much of his career, Tuke would spend each winter in London, and would travel to Europe – usually to Italy or the South of France – in the early spring, before spending the summer and autumn months in Cornwall. In 1923, in a change from this usual routine, he was invited to travel to the West Indies, where he produced several fine watercolours. The largest extant collection of Tuke's work is today in the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society in Falmouth, while another significant group is in the collection of the Falmouth Art Gallery.