Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Louis Philibert DEBUCOURT (Belleville 1775 - Paris 1832)

The Gust of Wind

Pen and grey ink and grey wash.
Numbered and inscribed 150 Debucourt on a label attached to the old backing board.
Inscribed Mr. Robin- on a label, partially torn off, on the old backing board.
186 x 200 mm. (7 3/8 x 7 7/8 in.)

Provenance:

A cutting from an unidentified 19th or early 20th century French auction catalogue pasted onto the old backing board.

Artist description:

A student, albeit briefly, of the painter Joseph-Marie Vien, Philibert-Louis Debucourt was from an early age determined to make his mark as a genre painter. Agrée at the Académie Royale in 1781, in the same year that he married and obtained lodgings in the Louvre, Debucourt exhibited at the Salons of 1781, 1783 and 1785, becoming a full member of the Académie in 1786. His subjects tended towards charming and intimate depictions of domestic life; as one scholar has noted, 'Scenes extolling the pleasures of family life abound in Debucourt's oeuvre.'1 However, the early death of his wife in 1783, leaving behind a young son whom he needed to support, is thought to have led Debucourt to concentrate on his work as a printmaker, since the production of colour aquatints had the potential to earn him a greater income than his paintings. Debucourt's colour prints of genre subjects of the 1780s were some of the most significant works in this new medium, and culminated in two major graphic works of Parisian genre subjects; the Palais Royal Gallery Walk and The Public Promenade. Until the turn of the century, Debucourt made engravings, often in colour, after his own paintings of genre scenes and portraits, but after 1800 was mainly engaged in reproducing the designs of other artists, such as Carle Vernet, which earned him a modest livelihood. Although he continued to show paintings at the Salons infrequently - in 1810, 1814, 1817 and 1824 - he never achieved much in the way of critical or financial success, and died in relative poverty.

Despite the fact that he designed almost six hundred prints, Debucourt seems to have produced relatively few drawings, and they are indeed very rare today. The large retrospective exhibition of

Debucourt's work as a painter, draughtsman and printmaker, held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1920, included just twelve drawings, while the catalogue noted a further eight examples recorded in auction catalogues and previous literature. Among the handful of drawings by the artist in public collections are examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, MA, as well a pair of drawings in the Horvitz Collection in Boston. The rarity of drawings by Debucourt has meant that a fuller understanding of his draughtsmanship remains something of a challenge.