

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Jean-Baptiste GREUZE (Tournus 1725 - Paris 1805)

A Child Hugging a Dog

0 x 0 cm (0 x 0 inches)

This charming sheet, drawn in Greuze's favoured medium for compositional studies of brush and grey-black wash, is a study for the little boy embracing a dog at the right edge of a large compositional drawing entitled *The Family Reconciliation* (*La réconciliation de la famille*) of c.1770, in the collection of the Phoenix Art Museum. It has been suggested that the Phoenix drawing was one of a pair of very large and highly finished genre drawings executed in brush and grey wash, together with its pendant, *The Angry Wife* (*La Femme colère*), today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Probably executed both as finished drawings for sale and as designs for engravings, these two large drawings are thought to have been inspired by Greuze's somewhat tempestuous family life, and the dog depicted in this drawing may have been a family pet.

In an earlier version of the composition of *The Family Reconciliation*, today in the Prat collection in Paris, the dog is absent, and the child is seen standing at a table. Another, much more sketchy compositional study for *The Family Reconciliation*, today in the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, also excludes the dog. A very similar child and dog is also found in a large, finished drawing of *The Paternal Blessing, or the Departure of Basile*, exhibited at the Salon of 1769 and today in the Art Institute of Chicago. The dog in the Chicago drawing, however, faces to the left.

Dogs appear often in Greuze's paintings and finished drawings, and the artist seems to have had a particular affection for them. Several studies of dogs were recorded in the sale of the contents of the artist's studio in 1843, following the death of his daughter Caroline, and others are noted in Jean Martin and Charles Masson's catalogue raisonné of Greuze's work, published in 1908.

The first recorded owner of this drawing was Comte A. G. P. de Bizemont Prunelé (1752-1837) who, apart from being a collector of drawings, paintings and objets d'art, was also a talented amateur artist and engraver. He studied with Charles-Nicolas Cochin and produced some 150 engravings and a number of landscapes, including several views of Orléans. A number of drawings from his collection were left to the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Orléans. Although it does not bear his collector's mark, this

drawing may have later belonged to the Parisian marchand-amateur Émile Louis Dominique Calando (1840-1898), since a pen and ink drawing closely matching its description was listed in the catalogue of the posthumous sale of his collection of mainly 18th century French drawings held in December 1899, which included ten sheets by Greuze.

Literature:

Possibly Jean Martin and Charles Masson, *Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint et dessiné de Jean-Baptiste Greuze*, Paris, 1908, p.65, no.1043 ('Enfant caressant un chien. H. 0m20. L. 0m29. – Esquisse à l'encre de Chine. Vente E. Calando, 12 décembre 1899, no. 82.');

London, Kate de Rothschild and Yvonne Tan Bunzl, *Master Drawings*, 1990, unpaginated, no.30; Kate de Rothschild, Kate de Rothschild: *Master Drawings. A Celebration, 35 Years in the Art World 1972-2007*, n.d. (2008), unpaginated, no.26; Clifford S. Ackley, 'Master drawings from the collection of Horace Wood Brock', *The Magazine Antiques*, February 2009, p.55, illustrated p.59, fig.11; Horace Wood Brock, Martin P. Levy and Clifford S. Ackley, *Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Boston, 2009, p.156, no.110, illustrated p.112.

Artist description:

Following a period of study in Lyon, Jean-Baptiste Greuze arrived in Paris sometime in the early 1750s and entered the studio of Charles-Joseph Natoire. Very little is known of the artist's early Parisian period. He was admitted into the Académie Royale as an associate member in 1755, in the category of peintre de genre particulier, and the same year exhibited at the Salon with some success. (He did not, however, supply a morceau de réception to the Académie, in order to gain full membership as an Academician, until 1769.) Greuze's paintings of moralizing genre subjects, exhibited at the annual Salons, earned him the praise of the influential critic Denis Diderot. He was also a fine portraitist, exhibiting a number of portraits at the Salon throughout the 1760s to considerable acclaim. While Greuze enjoyed the patronage of such prominent collectors as Jean de Jullienne, Ange Laurent de La Live de Jully, the Duc de Choiseul, the Marquise de Pompadour and the Empress Catherine II of Russia, his difficult temperament often alienated other clients. Even the artist's great champion Diderot, writing to the sculptor Falconet in 1767, described Greuze as 'an excellent artist, but a thoroughly unruly person. One must take his drawings and his pictures, and leave the man at that.' In 1769, angered by the rejection of his reception piece, a history painting, by the Académie, who instead admitted him only as a genre painter, Greuze refused to exhibit at the Salons until 1800, preferring to show his paintings in his studio. His reputation suffered after the Revolution, with the rise of Neoclassicism, and he died in poverty at the age of eighty, in his studio at the Louvre.

A gifted, versatile and prolific draughtsman, Greuze was praised as such by Diderot, who noted, in a review of the Salon of 1763, that 'this man draws like an angel.' He was equally adept in chalks, pastel and ink, and often exhibited finished drawings alongside his paintings at the Salons. The 18th century collector, dealer and connoisseur Pierre-Jean Mariette commented that Greuze's drawings were much in demand, and that collectors habitually paid high prices for them.