Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Louis-Auguste LEPERE (Paris 1849 - Domme 1918)

Studies of a Breton Fisherman

Charcoal, watercolour and gouache on board.

Signed A. Lepère in red chalk at the lower right.

Inscribed no.32 – Etude Le Vieux pecheur and 278 / (200F) on the verso.

A mountmaker's inscription in pencil on the verso.

406 x 291 mm. (16 x 11 1/2 in.)

This drawing of a shrimp fisherman carrying a large net and a basket is a fine example of the work of Lepère, whose reputation as a printmaker has somewhat overshadowed his considerable gifts as a draughtsman and watercolourist.

Exhibitions

Paris, Galerie Antoine Laurentin, Auguste Lepère, 1995, unnumbered.

Artist description:

A painter, draughtsman and printmaker, Louis-Auguste Lepère began his career as an illustrator and engraver for various publications, including the Magasin Pittoresque, La Revue illustrée and L'Illustration, while he also contributed illustrations to the magazines Graphic and Black and White in London and Harper's in America. In the early part of his career he produced wood engravings

characterized by a fine and delicate line. Around 1889 he took up the woodcut, and in the same year produced several prints of views of monuments of Paris erected for the Exposition Universelle. In 1894 Lepère entered into an exclusive arrangement with the print dealer and publisher Edmond Sagot, who from then onwards received his entire output for sale. Among the many books illustrated with his etchings was Georges Montorgueil's Paris au hasard, published in 1895. Lepère exhibited at the Salon des peintres-graveurs Français between 1890 and 1913, as well as at the Salon des Artistes Français and its successor, the Société nationale des Beaux-Arts, from 1870 to 1914. He also showed at the Salon d'Automne between 1903 and 1907, and sent works to exhibitions in Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy and Argentina. n 1905 a catalogue of his etchings and woodcuts was published by Alphonse Lotz-Brissonneau, a patron and close friend of the artist who had assembled an almost complete collection of Lepère's graphic work.

Lepère's renown as a printmaker, however, tended to overshadow his considerable gifts as a painter, to the artist's apparent chagrin. As one contemporary critic recalled, 'To the world, and especially the foreign world, the name of Lepère is chiefly familiar from his engravings and notably his woodcuts. The artist himself, however, considered these merely as auxiliary to his oils. "I am, above all, a painter", he would say remindfully if a suggestion were made to attribute pre-eminence to his plates and blocks. For originally he had taken up engraving as a breadwinning makeshift, and it was much against his wish that the popularity they won robbed him of the time he would for choice have spent at the easel.' In 1908 Lepère was given the honour of a lifetime exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints in one room of the Salon nationale des Beaux-Arts, while another retrospective was mounted at the Musée de Luxembourg in 1917, the year before the artist's death.

In his day, Auguste Lepère was much admired for his technical skill as both draughtsman and printmaker. As one critic noted in 1897, 'Lepère is an incomparable draughtsman, surmounting all sorts of difficulties with an ease which many just envy him; an engraver, too, of the first rank, handling with equal facility the knife or the burin, equally at home in relief engraving or in etching; also a lithographer of remarkable flexibility and breadth of touch. He excels, in fact, in every branch of his art. Everything he touches bears the impress of a truly personal originality, alike in his method of looking at things and in the way he reproduces them. With a deep knowledge of all the secrets of the draughtsman's art, he has one great merit, among many others – namely, in never being cramped in the expression of his ideas, in always succeeding in developing them to their fullest extent.' Like his paintings, Lepère's drawings are characterized by a freshness of execution and an abiding love of nature.