

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Edouard TRAVIES (Doullens 1809 - Paris 1876)

A Purple Glossy Starling (*Lamprotornis purpureus*), a Thrush or a Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) and a Thrush or a Star-Throated Antwren (*Rhopias gularis*)

Watercolour, pen and brown ink and wash, with framing lines in pencil.

Signed and dated Edouard Travies pt. 1835. in the lower margin.

170 x 100 cm. (6 3/4 x 4 in.)

Native to central Africa, the purple glossy starling is a beautifully vibrant bird, with metallic blue, violet and green wings. These birds are quite noisy and gregarious, and are commonly found in open woodland.

While the central bird has previously been identified within the thrush family, its colouring would suggest it might be more closely related to the kingbird or warbler families, and in particular the tropical kingbird, which is native to North and South America, and periodically found around Europe and Africa. These birds are characterized by a bright underbelly and greyish-green head and back colouring, as well as long legs and claws, fanned tail and precisely pointed beaks.

Although the lowermost bird was previously identified as a star-throated antwren, this also does not seem to be the case, as the antwren is a very small, quite round bird with a short, straight beak. The bird here depicted appears to relate more closely to the thrush family, however, the exact colourings do not match any living species of thrush, and it may be a variant no longer found in the wild.

Artist description:

Among the finest natural history draughtsmen of the 19th century in France, Edouard Traviès de Villers was a gifted watercolourist and illustrator, and exhibited at the Paris Salons between 1831 and 1866.

Best known for his ornithological watercolours, his activity in this field culminated in seventy-nine magnificent illustrations for his book *Les oiseaux les plus remarquables par leurs formes et leurs couleurs*, published in Paris and London in 1857. Traviès also illustrated other works of natural history, such as *Types du règne animal: Buffon en estampes*; a work intended for children that appeared in 1864. Traviès was further known for his paintings and watercolours of dead game, depicted hanging from a nail on a wall in a sort of trompe-l'oeil effect; indeed, he was one of the first 19th century French artists to develop this theme, which had been established in the previous century by such artists as Jean-Baptiste Oudry.

These watercolours by Edouard Traviès were once part of the exceptional collection of French ornithological watercolours of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries assembled in the 1920s and 1930s by the French industrialist and bibliophile Marcel Jeanson (1885-1942). Several of these watercolours were used to illustrate Achille Richard's *Oeuvres complètes de Buffon*, published in Paris in 1834, 1838 and 1845.