

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Nicolas OZANNE (Brest 1728 - Paris 1811)

A Fortified Island with Shipping

Pen and black ink, with double framing lines in black ink.

Laid down.

Signed *N. Ozanne in. et del.* in the lower left margin.

126 x 216 mm. (5 x 8 1/2 in.) [image]

148 x 239 mm. (5 3/4 x 9 3/8 in.) [sheet]

Nicolas Ozanne did not limit himself to the 'truth' of his royal commissions and naval works but also engaged in creative exercises featuring capricci and fantasy landscapes, which do not necessarily correspond to identifiable places. In these imaginative scenes, the landscapes are often populated with figures engaging in port activities, creating a kind of idealization of naval life. *A Fortified Island with Shipping* is unusual in Ozanne's drawn oeuvre in taking place offshore, far from the Continental coasts.

Mixing medieval fortifications with picturesque architecture, it depicts a fortress rising on a rocky promontory, where several circular towers punctuate the ramparts overlooking the sea. Several vessels - a lateen-rigged galley, a three-masted sailing ship and smaller boats - bring the scene to life. The precise use of black ink accentuates architectural and nautical details, such as the sea's waves, enhancing the legibility of the composition.

Artist description:

From a young age, Nicolas Ozanne displayed a remarkable talent for observation and accurate technical reconstruction of naval vessels. He was apprenticed to a naval engineer in his hometown, the port city of Brest, and as a result enjoyed a thorough understanding of ships and naval architecture that was made manifest in his work as a painter and engraver. In 1744 his father died and the sixteen-year-old Nicolas took it upon himself to guide his brothers and sisters toward the study of fine arts, particularly in the field of printmaking. The Ozanne family would become a prominent artistic household, made up of draughtsmen and engravers dedicated to the Navy. The young Ozanne was commissioned by King Louis XV to record his visit to Le Havre in 1749, and in the succeeding decade he assisted Claude-Joseph Vernet in his great series of paintings of the ports of France, commissioned by the King in 1753. In 1751 Ozanne settled in Paris when he was appointed dessinateur de la marine, royal draughtsman for the Naval Department and tasked with working on views produced during Louis XV's great voyage to Le Havre a few years earlier. Between Paris and Versailles, Ozanne also devoted himself to the nautical instruction of the Dauphin of France and his brothers.

It was in his role as dessinateur de la marine (an honour later shared by his younger brother and pupil

Pierre Ozanne) that Ozanne created, between 1762 and 1765, a famous series of plates depicting the principal ports of France, probably inspired by his voyages with Vernet, entitled *Recueil des vues des ports de France*. Thanks to his travels onboard naval vessels exploring the French and European coasts, Ozanne's work combined technical precision with artistic clarity, and bear witness to French maritime power during the Enlightenment. Influenced by the works of François Boucher and Charles-Joseph Natoire, as well as of the English engraver resident in Paris John Ingram, Ozanne refined his manner, particularly with regards to the foregrounds of his compositions, which became richer and more animated.