

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Jacob VAN STRIJ (Dordrecht 1756 - Dordrecht 1815)**

## **Winter Landscape with a Farm by a River**

Watercolour, pen and brown ink and brown wash, over a pencil underdrawing.

Signed *J: van Strij* at the lower left.

240 x 373 mm. (9 1/2 x 13/4 in.)

This watercolour is a fine example of a type of highly finished drawing that Jacob van Strij produced throughout his career. The present sheet is among the relatively few signed drawings by the artist and was almost certainly executed as an independent work of art. Van Strij was highly regarded for his winter scenes, which often evoke the work of 17th century Dutch masters. As one 19th century biographer noted of the artist, *'His desire to render nature faithfully and the care with which he did so went to such lengths that, even when ailing, he would have himself carried onto the ice on a sledge so that he could make sketches for paintings which he would later finish in his studio.'* Winter landscapes had become an uncommon subject among artists in the late 18th century, and Van Strij is one of a handful of artists of the period noted for his particular devotion to the genre.

As the late Robert-Jan te Rijdt has noted of the present sheet, *'Unlike the majority of his contemporaries, Van Strij did not depict the sports and activities associated with winter weather in Holland, but as in his summer landscapes, displayed a preference for the hushed atmosphere of secluded spots. This Winter landscape with a farm by a river is a case in point. The fence placed diagonally within the picture plane lends the picture a monumental quality which heightens the atmosphere of rustic quietude which Van Strij was striving to create. In the weather-beaten wheelbarrow, lying on its side, the artist has demonstrated his narrative skill. Another felicitous aspect is the suggestive use of colour and the less than precise rendering of the trees. Van Strij's winter scenes are often marred by an overly detailed portrayal of the bare branches. It is not clear whether the artist did this fine piece after nature or drew on his imagination.'*

A stylistically comparable watercolour of a winter landscape signed by Jacob van Strij is in the Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar in Weimar. Other winter scenes in watercolour by the artist are in the collections of the Amsterdams Historisch Museum in Amsterdam, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels, the Dordrechts Museum in Dordrecht, the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Fondation Custodia in Paris, the Boijmans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, the Kunstsammlungen zu

Weimar, and elsewhere.

The unidentified collector whose mark, with the letters V and C surmounted by a rampant lion, appears on the present sheet, has long remained a mystery. Thought to date from the 18th century, this collector's mark is most commonly seen on Italian drawings, but is also found on French, German and Netherlandish sheets.

The present also appears to bear part of the mark of the Viennese art dealer, auctioneer and collector Alexander Emil Posonyi (1839-1899), who established his business in Vienna and later Paris. Dealing in prints, drawings and paintings, he assembled an exceptional personal collection of prints and drawings by Albrecht Dürer, now in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, as well as drawings by Rembrandt.

### **Exhibitions**

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, *Langs velden en wegen: De verbeelding van het landschap in de 18de en 19de eeuw/ On Country Roads and Fields: The depiction of 18th- and 19th-century landscape*, 1997-1998, no.21 (lent by Thomas Barteel).

### **Literature:**

Wiepke Loos, Robert-Jan te Rijdt and Marjan van Heteren, *On Country Roads and Fields: The depiction of 18th- and 19th-century landscape*, exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, 1997-1998, pp.162-163, no.21 (where dated c.1790-1800).

### **Artist description:**

Together with his older brother Abraham, Jacob van Strij was trained in the Dordrecht studio of his father, the decorative painter Leendert van Strij. He completed his studies with Andries Lens in Antwerp, and also drew after the posed model at the city's Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, graduating in 1776. He returned to Dordrecht and there established a successful career. While his brother Abraham specialized in genre scenes, Jacob gained a reputation as a painter of landscapes and pastoral subjects; works which were particularly indebted to the example of the 17th century Dordrecht painter Aelbert Cuyp, whose style he could imitate quite closely. The two brothers often worked in collaboration on mural paintings and decorative wall hangings for private homes in the city.

However, Jacob seems to have given up large-scale mural painting around 1800, producing only cabinet pictures from then on. A gifted draughtsman and etcher, Jacob produced a number of fine figure drawings, pastoral subjects and landscapes in watercolour. These were often highly finished works intended for sale to collectors and, like his paintings, were often inspired by the example of the artists of the Dutch Golden Age.