`A Spring Day at Florence - from San Miniato`

William Callow

Sold

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REF: 1462

Description

William Callow, R.W.S. (1812-1908)
`A Spring Day at Florence - from San Miniato`

Signed lower right: Wm. Callow/1882
Watercolour heightened with touches of bodycolour and scratching out
34.7 by 50.3 cm., 13 ½ by 19 ¾ in.

Provenance:
With Thos. Agnew & Sons, Liverpool

Exhibited:
London, Society of Painters in Water-colours, Summer 1882

Callow was one of the best known topographical artists of the nineteenth century with a career spanning over seventy years. The son of a builder, he was employed as an eleven year old by the artist Theodore Fielding. In 1829 he went to work in Paris where he subsequently shared a studio with Thomas Shotter Boys and came under the influence of Bonington. He built up a successful teaching practice there in the early 1830s among the French nobility with his pupils including the Duc de Nemours and the tow children of King Louis Philippe.

In 1838 he was elected an Associate of the Old Watercolour Society which led to his return to England in 1841. In London he again became a very successful drawing master and began to exhibit widely. From the 1830s he travelled widely in Europe producing sketches which he would later use to produce, frequently large-scale, studio works which became greatly in demand. The present watercolour dates 1882 when he was seventy and still taking pupils. He exhibited at the Old Watercolour Society until his death in 1908 at the age of 96.

He first visited Italy and Florence in the autumn of 1840 and the present watercolour will date from sketches made on that visit. His diary records his progress from Milan to Venice and then on to the Padua, Ferrara and Bologna: `The next day we started in a vettura in company with two others for Florence, having been drawn by oxen at a snail's pace across the Appennines. We slept at a solitary habitation, Albergo del Nolta, in sight of Monte di Fo, and after two days' travelling at Florence. Here we remained for four days sketching all the wondering buildings. Forman being obliged to return to Paris, I proceeded by myself in a vettura to Rome' (William Callow - an Autobiography, 1908, pp.77-78).

This is a view of Florence from the south-west taken from near the thirteenth century church of San Miniato al Monte. The bridge over the river Arno is the famous Ponte Vecchio with the largest of the visible towers being part of the Palazzo Vecchio on the Piazza della Signoria.

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