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Study of a tree with a bridge beyond

Richard Wilson

£ POA



REF: 2551

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Description

Guy Peppiatt Fine Art Ltd.
Riverwide House, 6 Mason's Yard, Duke St. St. James's, London, SW1Y 6BU
T: 020 7930 3839 M: 07956 968 284 E: guy@peppiattfineart.co.uk www.peppiattfineart.co.uk

Richard Wilson (1713/14-1782)
Study of a Tree with a Bridge beyond

Black chalk on blue-grey laid paper
10.8 by 17.1 cm; 4 ¼ by 6 ¾ in.

Provenance:
Paul Sandby (1731-1809) (Lugt no.2112);
Captain Richard Ford (1860-1940);
Private Collection, USA

Literature:
Loan Exhibition of Works by Richard Wilson, exhibition catalogue 1925, p.20, no.98D;
Dr Paul Spencer-Longhurst, with Kate Lowry and David Solkin, Richard Wilson Online: A Digital Catalogue Raisonné, (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2014)., D 405

Exhibited:
London, Tate Gallery, Loan Exhibition of Works by Richard Wilson, 26th June to 30th September 1925, no.98D

Born in Penegoes, Powys, North Wales, Wilson became the leading British landscapist of his generation, as well as being widely regarded as one of the great artistic pioneers of the 18th century. He became instrumental in elevating landscape painting from being regarded as either topographical, or merely descriptive settings, into a genre in its own right, often endowed with classical or historical associations.

Wilson initially established himself as a portrait painter, however, during the time he spent in Italy between 1750 and 1757, Wilson became increasingly interested in landscape painting and inspired by European contemporaries, such as Francesco Zuccarelli (1702-1788), whom he met in Venice in 1751 and Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), who he met shortly afterwards in Rome and who strongly recommended landscape as a genre in preference to portraiture, Wilson altered track and it is his landscape painting for which he is celebrated.

On Wilson's return to London, he established a studio in the affluent Piazza of Covent Garden. He was a founding member of both the Society of Artists in 1760 and of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768, and he exhibited regularly at both institutions. However, in later years, for reasons which are still uncertain, Wilson's reputation underwent a rapid decline (from which it has only recently recovered). He turned increasingly to drink in his last years, eventually unable to even hold the post of Librarian at the Royal Academy, which is fellow Academicians had appointed him in an effort to help him. In 1781 he retired o the home of his cousin, Catherine Jones at Colomendy Hall, Clwyd, where he died the following year.

As Paul Spencer-Longhurst notes in the catalogue raisonné 'Most of Wilson's Italian drawings seem to have been made independently of his paintings, 'either as studies from nature, as ideas for compositions, as sketches of places visited, or as commissioned views.' (Ford 1951, p. 34). Nevertheless, D405 is perhaps loosely connected with the genesis of P123 Lake Avernus - II, Tate, London and other versions or the missing Celadon and Amelia (cf. E18 and other impressions). It is dated to circa 1754.

Richard Ford sold most of his collection of Wilsons at Christie's on 14th June 1929. Most of his collection was inherited from his great great grandfather Richard Ford (1758-1806). His son was the art historian Sir Brinsley Ford (1908-1999).

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