The Church of St Nicholas from the Charles Bridge, Prague

Samuel Prout

Sold



REF: 2122

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Description

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Samuel Prout (1783-1852)
The Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Charlemagne, Prague

Inscribed lower right: Prague/St Charles
Pencil and stump heightened with white
26.2 by 39.5 cm., 10 ¼ by 15 ½ in.

Provenance:
The Artist's studio sale, Sotheby's, 21st May 1852, lot 36;
Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, 24th September 1987, lot 205, one of two;
With Spink, London;
Anonymous sale, Bonham's, 6th June 2006, lot 44;
Private Collection, Ontario, Canada

The present drawing depicts the Church of the Virgin Mary and Saint Charlemagne, built on Mount Charles, the highest point in the new town of Prague. In September 1350, Charles IV personally laid the foundation stone for the church which took 27 years to build.

Samuel Prout developed a reputation for depicting detailed topographical studies, particularly of continental architectural views and he travelled widely throughout Europe in order to find suitable subject matter. He visited Prague in 1829, the year he was appointed Painter in Ordinary in Watercolours to George IV. He arrived in early September and made at least 17 drawings while he was there all on similarly sized sheets. Other examples are in the British Museum, the V & A, Birmingham Museum, the Fitzwilliam, Cambridge and Plymouth Art Gallery.

This trip proved hugely successful and as a result, he produced a series of lithographs entitled, Facsimile of Sketches made in Flanders and Germany, published in 1833, which included five views of Prague. Treatises and books on travel, became hugely popular in the 19th century, and Prout's publication was in the vanguard of these. It proved influential on many of Prout's contemporaries, including Thomas Shotter Boys, David Roberts and John Ruskin, who was directly inspired to undertake his first visit to Europe.

Prout made numerous, detailed on-the-spot pencil drawings, such as the present work, which served as the basis for the highly finished watercolours, executed in his studio on his return.

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