

A view over Lake Thun, Switzerland

Francis Danby



Description

Francis Danby, A.R.A. (1793-1861)
A view over Lake Thun, Switzerland

Signed and dated lower left: F Danby 1832
Watercolour heightened with scratching out
23.3 by 41.6 cm., 9 1/8 by 16 3/8 in.

Provenance: ,
Sir Thomas Marchant Williams Bt (1845-1914);
With Andrew Wyld, London, 2009

Literature:
Andrew Wyld, Summer Catalogue, 2009, no.16, p.32, ill.

Exhibited:
Bristol Art Gallery, Third Loan Exhibition, January 1906, no.10

Despite finding early success as an artist, Danby struggled with debt most of his life. Indeed it was debt that forced him to leave Bristol in 1824 and London in 1829, when he fled to mainland Europe. Between 1831 and 1836 the Danby family (the artist, his mistress and ten children) were living in Switzerland. They initially settled in Rapperswil, Lake Zurich, lodging with an impoverished nobleman. However, after a year, Danby's landlord refused him any further credit and the family had to move once more, this time to Geneva. Danby received significant support in Geneva and obtained numerous commissions, so despite the *Chambre d'Etrangers* considering expelling him, he settled in the city and was able to clear his debts.

Despite his success and the fact that he was able to regularly send works back to England for exhibition and to clients, Danby appears to have had a mixed relationship with Switzerland. As Francis Greenacre notes that in letters to his friend and patron John Gibbons in December 1835 and February 1836 Danby calls Geneva a 'loathsome prison' and punishment for his past errors and promises that he will no longer live like a cabbage: I have slept for 6 years. He described the landscape as both extremely beautiful (in a letter to George Fennell Robson) and again to Gibbons as huge, stiff and unvaried (Francis Greenacre, *Francis Danby 1793-1861*, 1988, p. 32). However, Danby continued to exhibit Swiss views into the 1850s and living by the lakes of Switzerland he was provided not only with artistic inspiration, as evidenced by the present watercolour, but was also provided an outlet for his other passion, sailing and boat building.