

Wooded Landscape with a Country Cart and Faggot Gatherers

Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.

Sold



Description

Thomas Gainsborough, R.A. (1727-1788)
Wooded Landscape with a Country Cart and Faggot Gatherers

Pen and brown ink and grey, green and pink washes, heightened with black chalk, on prepared paper, varnished
22.1 by 31.0 cm., 8 ½ by 12 ¼ in.

Provenance:

Probably John Warde (1721-1775), Squerryes Court, Westerham, Kent;
Major John Roberts O'Brien Warde (b.1898), Squerryes Court, Westerham, Kent;
Thence by descent until 2010

Literature:

M.T. Ritchie, *English Drawings: An Anthology*, London 1935, pl.25;
Mary Woodall, *Gainsborough's Landscape Drawings*, London, 1939, p.131, no.344;
John Hayes, *The Drawings of Thomas Gainsborough*, New Haven and London, 1970, vol. I, p.182, no.317;
Timothy Clifford, Anthony Griffiths and Martin Royalton-Kisch, *Gainsborough and Reynolds in the British Museum*, exhibition catalogue, London 1978, p.15, under no.35;
John Hayes and Lindsay Stainton, *Gainsborough Drawings*, exhibition catalogue, 1983, pp.118-119, no.49

Exhibited:

Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art and elsewhere, *Gainsborough Drawings*, 1983, no.49

Landscape drawings account for over three-quarters of Gainsborough's output as a draughtsman, and make up some of his finest works. These drawings were done for his own pleasure, in varying degrees of finish, and using a range of different techniques. William Jackson, a friend of the artist and early biographer, noted that 'If I were to rest his reputation upon one point; it should be on his Drawings.... No man ever possessed methods so various in producing effects, and all excellent'. Overburdened with portrait commissions, Gainsborough seems to have turned to the freedom of landscape drawing as a means of relaxation. He was a prolific draughtsman, and while he apparently never sold any of his drawings, he is thought to have given away many of them as presents.

The present drawing is dated by Hayes to the late 1760s and is typical of Gainsborough's use of experimental techniques. He combines pen and ink and various coloured washes, heightens the drawings with white chalk and then varnishes the sheet to strengthen the image. Gainsborough's experiments in technique became more and more complex and in a letter to Jackson in 1773 he explains his methods but demands of the recipient 'Swear now never to impart my secret to any one living' (see *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, edited by John Hayes, 2001, p.111).

This drawing includes many typical Gainsborough motifs - the copse of trees with the effect of light achieved with white chalk, the woman and children gathering wood in the foreground which anticipate the subject matter of his 'fancy pictures' of the 1780s, and the horse and cart. The present work relates most closely to 'Wooded Landscape with a Boy reclining in a Cart' in the British Museum (see *Gainsborough*, exhibition catalogue edited by Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone, 2002, no.119, p.221) with its confident use of pen and ink and the motif of the horse and cart disappearing down a country track.