

Gallery Notes



JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS

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Gallery Notes

is published to acquaint readers with the
paintings and drawings offered for sale by

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FOREWORD

In publishing *Gallery Notes*, we often forfeit the space for text with illustrations - as faithful and as large as possible. The accompanying captions hopefully provide some relevant biographical information 'varnished' with a thin layer of art history, where applicable! Putting together a selection of new acquisitions for sale often entails considerable research, especially with artists unfamiliar to us or whose work appears infrequently on the art market. The preference and style of *Gallery Notes* often tends to focus on the context and merit of the corresponding picture or drawing within the painter's oeuvre and, space permitting, we try to include as much up to date research as possible. Above all, our own individual interpretation is offered as guidance and, we trust, an alternative to 'write-ups' in standard reference books and websites.

The pictures by Lagrenée, Voet and Ward have all emerged from private collections and present the chance to learn yet more about the lives of these painters who appear to have worked almost exclusively from one commission to the next with little let-up. In fact all the painters represented here were acknowledged specialists in their genre and *Worthy* (p.7) probably meant as much to its owner, in the flesh as well as in oil (!), as Lagrenée's devotional *Virgin and the Christ Child* (p.3) did to the many generations of Rochefoucaulds.

The refined paintings of François Bonvin continue to attract collectors and we certainly marvelled at the auction result for one of his paintings this summer (*L'Ecolier*, lot 48, Christie's, London, 6th July 2010, £ 169,250 including buyer's premium). As the nineteenth century recedes ever further into the past, specific areas of collecting in that field, such as the 'Chardin Revival', are now experiencing an increasing and justified interest.

PEAKS AND GLACIERS 2011

Our forthcoming exhibition of Alpine paintings will take place here in the gallery in January and early February 2011. A catalogue containing approximately twenty or more pictures for sale will be available at the beginning of January, so please contact David Gaskin by email or phone to receive a copy. Many of the new acquisitions, including mountain views by E.T. Compton, C.H Contencin and G. Loppé are already available on our website which is regularly updated under the section 'Alpine'. Individual images can be sent as high resolution scans on request as per usual

W.J.Mitchell
November, 2010



Jacques Fourcy (1906-1990)
Chamonix Aiguilles

Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée (1725-1805)

The Virgin and the Christ child

oil on canvas

23 ¼ x 29 in. (59 x 74 cm.)

with very fine carved and gilded Louis XVI frame

Provenance: Francois XII de la Rochefoucauld (1747-1827) and Felicité Sophie de Lannion (1745-1830) ; their grand-daughter, Sophie Françoise de la Rouchefoucauld (1799-1877) ; her daughter, Louise Pauline de Castelbajac (1825-1902) ; her daughter, Charlotte Marie Oudinot (1850-1931); her daughter, Henriette Pourroy de L'Auberivière de Quinsonas (1877-1980), married to Henri, Marquis de Chavagnac (1865-1940).

All through his working life Lagrenée kept a *livre de raison* recording his works. Published in 1877 in Paris by E. de Goncourt, it forms a valuable resource for the study of Lagrenée's works, listing four hundred and fifty-seven items. Between 1755 and 1798 he submitted one hundred and fifty pictures to the Paris Salon with three Virgin and Child subjects alone in 1763.

The Parisian Lagrenée began his career as a pupil of Carle van Loo and by 1749 had won the prestigious Prix de Rome with *Joseph recounting his dreams to the Pharaoh* (now lost). Although destined to enter a newly formed Ecole under royal patronage in Paris, Lagrenée went to Rome in 1750. At the 'Académie française de Peinture' in Rome he underwent a formative if youthful fixation with Baroque painting. Nonetheless, the inspiration of the seventeenth century Bolognese school was stronger – in particular the works of Guido Reni (1575 – 1642) and Francesco Albani (1578-1660). Four years later Lagrenée was back in Paris and was received into the Académie de Peinture et Sculpture in 1755 with the *Rape of Deianeira*. This was the painter's eulogy to Annibale Carracci's Farnese Palace ceilings and also a homage to Guido Reni's own *Deianeira*, already in the French royal collection by then. Lagrenée started to attract good patrons from the aristocracy and the new generation of financiers in Paris. His reputation for decorative and attractive scenes from mythology and religious episodes grew quickly and in 1760 he was called to St. Petersburg. As First Painter to the Empress Elizabeth and director of the painting academy, this was a prestigious posting for the French artist. Surprisingly, with the exception of his *Empress of Russia protecting the Arts*, 1761 (The Hermitage) no other work from his Russian period is known of today

As professor of the Académie in Paris by 1763 Lagrenée's output over the next twenty years was prodigious. Through the Salon he won the admiration and patronage of Diderot who wrote favourably about him on many occasions. Diderot advocated that Lagrenée excelled at paintings of a smaller format and, despite his numerous commissions for royal palaces and churches, Lagrenée did indeed prefer smaller, more devotional pictures and increasingly moved away from large format canvases. Like Carracci and Albani, Lagrenée could return to mythological and devotional subjects again and again earning the epithet as the French Albani - *l'Albane français*.

Lagrenée believed in the importance of artistic invention as one of the fundamentals in an apprenticeship. As a rejection of naturalism he strove to produce classicizing compositions in which monumental figures can enact the narrative through expressive gesture. Sculptural and beautifully observed, our devotional Madonna is the archetypal Lagrenée female figure. Painted in 1627 for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, a *Virgin and Child* by Guido Reni was certainly an inspiration to the present composition. At some point during the papacy of Benedict XIV, around 1755, the picture was removed from Santa Maria Maggiore to the Quirinal Palace and it is unknown where Lagrenée would have seen the original. The *putti* were added by Lagrenée but the sleeping Christ child reclines in the same pose and on a similar velvet pillow as in Guido Reni's work. The column to the left of the Virgin Mary is directly behind Reni's Madonna. Sadly the painting was transferred to the Vatican in 1870 and has never come to light since. Although Reni's oval *Virgin and Sleeping Child*, (Doria-Pamphili Gallery, Rome) was another 1627 commission it is a more restrained and frugal composition with the Virgin Mary's joined in prayer. Nonetheless, the sleeping Christ child bears an undeniable likeness to the one in this early work by Lagrenée.

The Virgin and the Christ child can be dated to the earliest part of his career, the 1750's, just as he emerged from the teaching and manner of the celebrated Carle van Loo whom Voltaire described as the Raphael of France. With their fashionable Rococo colours, Lagrenée's devotional paintings were responsible for reviving the taste of the previous century. Until the late 1780s his pictures were constantly in demand and a combination of versatility and a mastery of the artistic traditions were fundamental to this academician's enduring success. We are very pleased to be publishing an important addition to his known *oeuvre*. Originally done for the La Rochefoucaulds *The Virgin and the Christ Child* has remained in that same family in France until today, passing through the female lineage on each occasion.

W.J.M



Jakob-Ferdinand Voet (1639-1689)

Portrait of a Noblewoman

oil on canvas

26 x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (66 x 50 cm.)

Voet moved to Rome in 1663 to work for the Chigi family. Pope Alexander VII, Fabio Chigi, was one of the biggest art collectors of the period together with other members of his family and the Papal Court. With such important patrons Voet's notable style of portraiture rapidly became fashionable. His portraits of cardinals and aristocrats decorated Roman palaces and his *Belle* or *Dama elegante* pictures, often produced in a decorative series, had a certain impact on the artistic scene. Our portrait of an Italian *elegante* most likely dates from the middle period of his Roman stay around 1670.

Born in Antwerp, Voet was rightly considered an accomplished Flemish painter amongst the Roman nobility and owed his success to the cosmopolitan and worldly character he would invest in his sitters. In the footsteps of Van Dyck, this 'Northern school' realism was ideally suited to the tastes of these patrons who were keen to bridge the Catholic officialdom of Rome, perhaps contentiously, with a distinct elegance and verve in their portraits. Mostly Voet preferred life-sized bust or full-length portrait formats. A prevalent dark background allowed him to focus on the wardrobe and facial demeanor. However, Voet is recorded as working in Paris before Rome, which would explain the French elements of his portraiture. Like the Medici family's own Fleming portraitist, Justus Sustermans, often revered as the greatest portrait painter in Italy during the late Baroque, both artists incorporated French, Spanish and even Venetian trends into their commissions.

Two notable Roman families, the Mancini (in particular the Marazzini branch) and Parravicini were Voet's principal patrons after the Chigi. Residing in Rome the Parravicini originally came from Como. Together with the Lombardy contacts Voet himself established whilst in Rome, it can be assumed they were responsible for Voet's transfer to Milan by 1680 as his hitherto lucrative employment came to an abrupt end. In January 1678 Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi banned Voet from working in Rome on the grounds that his 'paintbrush was a tool of lasciviousness' and his 'house continually thronged with ladies and cavaliers buying portraits.' Few would have opposed the Pope's stance on censorship and public morals but since the Pontiff and his entourage were among Voet's more frequent sitters, an element of 'double standards' seems to have prevailed in this instance! Until recently details of the last decade of Voet's career have been somewhat vague with auction and dealers' catalogues opting for a neutral 'circa 1700' as his demise. Some excellent research by Cristina Geddo (*The Burlington Magazine*, vol. LXXXI, pp.138-144) now proves that this very successful portrait painter perhaps went on to further acclaim in Milan, Florence and Turin - finishing off in Paris at the court of the Sun King, Louis XIV. Indeed one of Milan's society painters, Giorgio Bonola, produced a dozen copies in 1680 after Voet's portraits of patrician *Milanesi* and references were frequently made to *famoso Ferdinando*. But aside from an evident demand for Voet's portraits, Milan lacked a court offering the necessary continuity and financial security for his profession. Voet was on the move again. Recorded in Florence in 1681 Voet was surely looking to fill the shoes of the recently deceased Sustermans as chief portraitist to the Medici family. The Florence scheme was clearly in vain as, soon after, he appears at the Savoy court in Turin staying there until 1684. Amedeo II of Savoy married Marie d'Orleans, the daughter of Phillippe I of France and Louis XIV's niece, in 1684 and through this connection, via introductory letters, Voet ended his career in Paris with a most prestigious position at Europe's premier court.

Unsurprisingly the popularity and demand of portraits never waned during this period; Europe's royal and noble families needed visual records for posterity, prestige and vaunt. Portraits, too, were often the preliminary steps to marriage negotiations and it is tempting to speculate about what future awaited this young *bella* whose likeness was captured here in her finest apparel.

W.J.M



James Ward, R.A. (1769-1859)

Worthy, a favourite hunter

oil on panel, 32 x 44¼ in. (81.3 x 112.7 cm.)

signed and dated 1823; inscribed on an old label on the reverse with title.

Provenance: Commissioned by William Wigram (1780-1858), and thence by descent.

Literature: (probably) C. R. Grundy, *James Ward RA*, p. 45, no. 387

Ward exhibited his first painting of a thoroughbred at the Royal Academy in 1809, and even in his own, long lifetime it was for his horses that his skills as an animal painter were most highly praised. Our painting was done as Ward reached the zenith of his achievements in this genre, with the publication in 1823 and 1824 of fourteen lithographs of Celebrated Horses. Ward became an accomplished mezzotint engraver early on in his career, and was able in each of the prints in this series to achieve the same remarkable union of setting and subject which we see in the present picture. Numerous were the strands of influence upon Ward's art: a fascination with wild and exotic beasts was necessarily held in check, perhaps, by extensive tours of the British Isles painting portraits of livestock for the Board of Agriculture; like his great predecessor, Stubbs, detailed anatomical study underlay Ward's talent for drawing creatures; furthermore, he was intimate with the art of the Flemish Old Masters, notably Rubens and Snyders, and, at the same time, he became a frequent visitor to the British Museum to study the Elgin Marbles and 'their extraordinary naturalism and deviation from the classical norm'¹

This synthesis of assorted stimuli lies at the heart of Ward's unusual artistic education and is conspicuous in the arresting power of this panel. As with many of his monumental animal portraits, the landscape here is confined to the bottom third of the composition, accentuating the majesty of the creature; the alertness of expression and the vitality radiating from every sinew of his quivering, gleaming flanks are extraordinary. There is no fantasy here, and in this Ward no doubt agreed with one critic's view that, '...there is a spirit and fire, a kind of intelligence in the horse's head...when a fine horse is untrammelled and free, which cannot be excelled by the substitution of an ideal form.'² In the absence of any document, one can only imagine the proud owner's satisfaction with this remarkable tribute to a cherished possession. It is no wonder that Ward is said to have influenced Géricault and Delacroix, but, equally, surprising that in the pantheon of British art, he has remained 'The Forgotten Genius'³, when, to this writer's mind at least, a horse by James Ward is far more intriguing and desirable than a repetitious effort by the ever-popular Munnings.

J.F.M.

1 - Jane Munro, *James Ward*, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, exhibition catalogue (1992), p. 7

2 - Charles Bell, *An Essay on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting*, London, 1806, p. 75 (quoted in the above)

3 - Title of monograph on the artist by Oliver Beckett, (1995).





Antoine Guillemet (1841-1918)

La Tour Vauban, St. Vaast-la-Hougue

oil on canvas

21¼ x 29 in. (54 x 73.5 cm.)

signed lower right, with fine antique frame

Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue was one of Guillemet's cherished places to paint at. Indeed Boudin and his followers were also drawn to the region. On a low-lying coastline this fort dominates the scene from near and afar. Built by the great military architect and engineer, Sebastian Vauban (1633-1707), *La Tour Vauban* has changed very little to date. Cottages and outbuildings cluster around the tower which sits on a man-made causeway keeping it accessible over the tides. Vauban was named *commissaire-général des fortifications* under Louis XIV and thereby charged with the successful fortification of France's borders. With a long and distinguished military career behind him, Vauban went on to become a *Maréchal de France* in 1703. The naval battle of Saint Vaast-la-Hougue took place off the town in 1692. On 3 June 1692 during a heated battle with the Anglo-Dutch fleet, twelve French ships were sunk in the vicinity of the Island of Tatihou, just off the coast of Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue. It was the decisive naval battle of the Nine Years' War, also known as the War of the English Succession.

During Guillemet's lifetime the village was no more than a coastal hamlet on the Cotentin peninsula and today the population remains at about two thousand people. To the *plein air* specialist like Antoine Guillemet, St. Vaast offered the variety of a huge tidal range with frequent changes in the weather and that silvery light distinctive to all Channel ports.

Browsing through Guillemet's Salon diary a *St. Vaast* or *Tour de la Hougue* subject was submitted in the following years: 1881 to 1883, 1893 (two pictures) 1895, 1888 - 1890 and 1900's *La Tour de la Hougue (Manche)* was even submitted with a poem about the tower, printed in the official Salon

catalogue ! But repetition didn't seem to blunt the location's appeal endorsed by this marvellous, unpublished composition of a breezy summer's day.

P.J.M



François Bonvin (1817-1887)

La vaisselle

oil on canvas,

17¾ x 12¾ in. (44.5 x 33 cm.)

signed and dated 1858, with fine antique frame

As a member of Courbet's 'Realist' movement and as a friend to younger painters such as Fantin-Latour and Whistler, Bonvin became an influential figure. He was awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 1870. A greater understanding of the extraordinary period in which he lived has led to a renewed appreciation of the quieter, more subjective paintings of the whole 'Chardin revival' movement, whose other exponents, notably Antoine Vollon, Ribot and Philippe Rousseau, are familiar to readers of our *Gallery Notes*.

J.F.M.



Alfred Stevens (1823-1906)

Tête de jeune fille

oil on canvas

15 x 20 in. (38 x 30.5 cm.)

signed, circa 1885

Provenance: John Mitchell, London, 1965, Private collection, San Francisco, Private collection, England 1975.

Exhibited: *Alfred Emile Leopold Stevens (1823-1906)* A loan exhibition, John Mitchell and Sons, London, March 1973, cat. 14., ill. plate 18 *Alfred Stevens* University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, September -October, 1977, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, November- January 1978, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal, February-March 1978, pp.88-9, cat. 39, ill.

Literature: *Connoisseur* (May,1973), ill., *Le Soir*, Brussels (27th May, 1973) ill., *The Times*, London (21st May, 1973) ill.

SCANDINAVIAN PICTURES AT
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Otto Ottesen (1816-1892)

Still life of roses in a glass vase
oil on canvas

14 ½ x 12 in. (37 x 30.5 cm.)
signed and dated 1867



Marcus Larsson (1825-1864)

Stormy landscape with a torrent near Atvidaberg, Sweden
oil on canvas
29 x 39 in. (74 x 98.5 cm.), signed and dated 1860



Amaldus Clarin Nielsen (1838-1932)

Arisholmen, Fredrikstad, Norway
oil on card
6 ¾ x 11½ in. (38 x 30.5 cm.)
signed and dated 1886

Both the Norwegian Nielsen and Danish Larsson studied at the Düsseldorf *Kunstakademie* and belonged to the group of painters who became known as the Düsseldorf School. Lasting from about 1820 to 1860, the later Düsseldorf School artists, such as these newcomers to *Gallery Notes*, were known for their extreme naturalness of representation. The German artists, Andreas Achenbach and Johann Schirmer, two of the leading exponents of the group circa 1850, specialized in landscapes focused in a brittle and clear light. Their larger landscapes tended to be more staged and melodramatic. The *Kunstakademie* became the established centre of German Romantic painting attracting a large number of aspirants, amongst those who came were many Scandinavian and American painters, including Albert Bierstadt and Eastman Johnson, to mention some of the more famous students.

W.J.M

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Each issue of Gallery Notes is carefully researched for accuracy of comment and the reproductions are as faithful as possible. However, often there is considerably more material on an artist than can be included here and colour transparencies may be a better guide to the original, so please do not hesitate to let us know if we can be of help in this respect. We would also ask for your help in avoiding wastage. If you do not care to remain on our mailing list or if you change your address or wish Gallery Notes to be sent to an address other than the present one, please advise us. May we, in return, offer our guidance on the acquisition, sale, conservation and framing of paintings, and on their valuation for probate, insurance, C.G.T. or other purposes. An independent view of buying and selling at auction has always been advisable.

Our policy remains unchanged. Across all schools, periods, and values, we seek, with rigorous selectivity, a high standard of quality in what we buy. Once satisfied, we feel able to offer works with confidence, backed up by long experience, integrity and scholarship. The business is one of long term friendship, not short-term advantage.

We hope that in receiving Gallery Notes you will share the interest and enjoyment which they have brought to collectors throughout the world for over fifty years.

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