Watercolour - The Print Collectors

Object: Watercolour

Place of origin: Paris (painted)

Date: 1860-1864 (painted)

Artist/Maker: Daumier, Honoré, born 1808 - died 1879 (painter)

Materials and Techniques: Pen and ink, wash and watercolour over traces of black chalk on paper

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Constantine Alexander Ionides

Museum number: CAI.118

Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, level C, case IONIDES, shelf 20

Public access description

The great French graphic artist and caricaturist Honoré Daumier often returned to the subject of collectors and connoisseurs, looking over artist's shoulders or pouring over portfolios of choice prints, as in this picture. It has been said that Daumier chose such subjects because they sold well, appealing to collectors who saw their interests reflected. But their saleability alone does not account for Daumier's fascination with the subject, to which he returned so often. In the words of Henry James' memorable essay on Daumier, in them we see reflected 'the old Parisian quay, the bellittered print-shop, the pleasant afternoon, the glimpse of the great Louvre and the other side of the Siene, ... estampes suspended in the window and doorway .. extracted, piece by piece from musty portfolios'. In such works Daumier captured the essence of the whole disease of collecting, and it is appropriate that the present example should have been owned by the great collector Constantine Alexander Ionides, who gave it to the Victoria and Albert Museum with other fine examples of Daumier's work, including a notable 'Railway Waiting Room'.

Descriptive line

Watercolour, 'The Print Collectors', by Honoré Daumier, French school, ca. 1860-4

Physical description

Scene of two connoisseurs, one seated, one standing, looking through a portfolio of prints. They are in a room in which the walls are densely hung with paintings.

Dimensions

Height: 34.5 cm, Width: 31.1 cm

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Object history note

Acquired by Constantine Alexander Ionides by 1878; lent in 1878 by Ionides to Daumier exh. at Durand-Ruel in Paris, cat no. 205); in his inventory of 1881 (private collection) as 'Les collectionneurs d'estampes' with a valuation of £100; Bequeathed by C.A. Ionides, 1900

Historical context note

A study for this drawing, in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, was no. 156 in the Daumier exhibition organised by the Arts Council of Great Britain, held at the Tate Gallery 1961.

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O25403/the-print-collectors-watercolour-daumier-honore/