

Thomas Shotter Boys



Montmartre, Paris

Reference: 10945

Dimensions:

Height: 9.50 cm / 3¾ in

Width: 16.60 cm / 6½ in

Inscribed l.r.: Paris 1832, watercolour

9.5 x 16.6 cm

Provenance

Sotheby's, 13 March 1980, lot 59;

David Messum, 'Les Jeunes Romantiques', Beaconsfield, June 1980;

Private collection UK until 2018

Views of Paris are considered to be the most important subjects drawn by the artist. This delicate and spontaneous watercolour dating from 1832 shows Boys at the height of his powers exhibiting great subtlety in the treatment of light and space. 1832 was a turbulent year in Paris; in April and May there was an outbreak of cholera which left over 18,000 people dead including the liberal orator General Lamarque, whose funeral on 5th June and the subsequent uprising have been immortalised in Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables'.

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Boys moved to Paris in the early to mid 1820s when British engravers were in demand. He met Bonington there and became his closest English friend during that artist's final two years of life. He taught Bonington etching and was almost certainly one of his pupils in turn, and copied some of his work. By the early 1830s, when William Callow was Boys' pupil and they shared a studio in Rue du Bouloy, Boys's work had developed a style grounded in topographical accuracy with a sophisticated handling of watercolour.

The present work illustrates how Paris at this date was significantly smaller than the city is now. The hill of Montmartre rose above the plain of the Seine outside the city walls. It was the site of a gypsum quarry and windmills where grain was ground for bread for the city. There was a telegraph station on the top of the hill which had been used by Napoleon to transmit orders to the French troops and to receive news.